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Introductory Science Text-Books

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# ETHICS









# AN INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY OF ETHICS.

*Adapted from the German of G. Von. GIZYCKI, Professor of  
Philosophy in the University of Berlin.*

BY

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*"Morality is the proper science and business of mankind in general,"—*  
J. LOCKE.



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## INTRODUCTION.

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ETHICAL PHILOSOPHY has both a scientific and a practical aim. Its scientific task is to furnish a man with a clear consciousness of his moral life, and to give him a deeper understanding of this most significant side of reality, so that he may grasp its ultimate principles. Its practical task is to answer that most personal and earnest question : How am I to act? How ought I to conduct my life? Thus as the great art of a good and wise life it becomes the most important of all teachings. It is a science for all ; inasmuch as every one is in need of enlightenment and guidance.

Human conduct has not waited for science to lead it ; Custom and law try to order the doing and the leaving undone of the members of society. Custom comprehends the rules which are impressed by praise and blame, self-approval and self-disapproval ; law includes civic codes, that is, the precepts which the state enforces by physical

coercion or the infliction of external punishment. Now ethical philosophy fixes the means of testing the goodness or perfection of the moral ideas which actually prevail, and of the established regulations of the law; it thereby puts us into a position to improve custom and law, to bring these nearer to the ideal pattern, that is, to custom and law as they ought to be—as they would be if they were in accord with the highest standard of all worth. Therefore the legislator who wishes to improve the actual regulations of the State, may learn from ethics what the highest standard of good is. Also it will furnish counsel to the individual citizen in the conduct of his own life and enlighten his conscience, so that he may judge and rule aright both his own actions, wishes, and thoughts, and those of his fellow-men.

# ELEMENTS OF ETHICS.

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## CHAPTER I.

### THE STANDARD OF MORALS.

“The public welfare is still the supreme law.”—FREDERICK III.

#### (1.) *Analysis of Moral Ideas.*

WHAT ought I to do? My conscience tells me that I ought to do what is right. But what actions are right? Of the justice or injustice of some I am as certain as I am of my own existence. But about others I have no immediate intuition; different duties seem to conflict with one another; I am in doubt. How can I free myself from this indecision of my moral judgment? How answer that question of questions: What ought I to do? To search for some method of answering it, is our task.

Where I entertain no doubt whatever that a certain course of action is right or wrong, there I generally find the men about me are of the same opinion as I. But in some cases it happens that they approve what I condemn, and condemn what I approve, with apparently no less firm conviction that their judgment is right, than I that mine is right. How, then, can I assure myself that my opinion and not theirs is the correct one? and how can I convince them that they are in error? Evidently it will not suffice to fall back on my intuitive feeling, for theirs is exactly opposite; and as I do not regard theirs as a standard for mine, neither can I require them to adopt my feelings as the standard of theirs. But is there not, perhaps, in such cases something common to us both, to which I might refer in order to convince

them? Is there nothing by which I can justify my moral judgment?

What I am searching for is a supreme moral criterion. I need one such and only one. For if I should have several, then each might furnish a different answer to any question of casuistry; and in order to decide among their conflicting answers I should be in need of a still higher criterion.

There seems to be only one method to pursue; we must examine those of our moral judgments about which we have no doubt, and see whether they do not point to some uniform principle.

Now when I consider the qualities of character which I regard as morally good I find that all of them have the tendency to advance the general welfare or happiness, and when I consider those which I look upon as morally bad, I find that they all have the opposite tendency. In this one circumstance, that they make for the public welfare, all those qualities agree which I approve—all virtues: justice, faithfulness, purity, sincerity, benevolence, and the like—while those qualities which I condemn have this one peculiarity in common, that if unhindered they do harm to society in general—such as injustice, untrustworthiness, selfishness, unchasteness, cowardice, and the like.

In a similar way, upon special examination, I find that rules of duty have this in common: they forbid a line of conduct that on the whole is hostile to the public interest, and command such as is advantageous.

I admit that in many cases I approve of disregarding a general rule; for instance, the one which commands us to respect the property of others; as when I would throw goods overboard to keep a ship from sinking, or blow up houses to prevent the spread of a fire. But in just these cases I find that the public welfare requires an exception to the general rule.

Wherefore the public welfare is proved to be the regulating principle of our moral judgment, and, being that, it is also the final criterion to which we are to refer all questions of morality.



If in discussion with any one I try to convince him that some act is wrong which he holds to be right, by showing him that it clashes with the general welfare, I am appealing to his conscience, for the advancement of the well-being of all is the inmost will of his conscience, only I turn "from the king badly informed to the king better informed." And likewise when I correct any of my own notions of what is right by subjecting them to that criterion, my own opinion is still a decision of my conscience; for this is that which induces me to submit my various moral conceptions to re-examination; the common principle underlying my own moral convictions is the standard according to which I arrive at a new decision.

It is true that I do not possess an intuitive moral faculty, which in each instance informs me with instinctive certainty immediately what, in that special case, is right or wrong, as through my senses I discover what is red, what blue, what cold, what warm. And for that very reason I perceive it to be my duty to guard against hasty decisions, which are nothing but the first impressions of the feelings. Morality is often a problem for us, as Salter says. Long and complicated processes of thought are often required before we can settle what is right, and our reason is subject to error; but still we trust to it, for in countless cases it is valid. We have faith in the natural sciences, although we know they have not been imparted to us through divine inspiration, but are the growing product of human experience, and of human, often erroneous, thinking. How changeable, and as it seems to us now, how false have been men's opinions about the nature of things; and still we know that there is only one truth, only one agreement of our thoughts with the thing we think about, and that we are now in part able to discover what the truth is. We have sure knowledge of much that is really and truly good for the health of the individual man, and of much that is injurious; we do not make the conditions of health according to whim, we discover them, they belong to the nature of things. Some men doubt the most certain results of this department of science; experiments show who is in the right.

As in physical nature plants, animals, and men, have their distinct characteristics, as special causes working upon them bring about special results without fail, so the mental life of man, his sensations, emotions, and ideas, have definite laws, which we do not make, but find. These laws are a part of nature like those of mechanics. And the conditions of peaceful social life among men, of their welfare and the happiness of society inhere in the nature of things. That one line of conduct furthers these ends, and another hinders their attainment, is as much a fact of scientific knowledge as anything in chemistry or astronomy. Since human society began, men have gathered experiences that prove it; and their latest wisdom finds expression in the fundamental rules of morals among civilized people. It happens that one or another of these rules may be doubted, but some also doubt the doctrine that the earth revolves about the sun. Let it be an incentive to us always to remain conscious of the reasons for our convictions.

In reference to very few things does there prevail so great an agreement as in the sphere of ideas about right and wrong. Although the religious sentiments of individual men and of races are so different, yet relatively a striking unanimity prevails as to what character deserves praise and what blame. All of the more highly civilized races of the present time are almost at one on the fundamental questions of morals, and where differences exist in their views the subjects of the different nations might easily be brought into agreement. Englishmen, Frenchmen, Germans, Italians, Russians, can come together and treat of moral subjects; they regard morals as well as the sciences to be an international affair. And even when we associate with members of a race widely differing from us in civilization—as for example the Hindoo, or Chinese, or Japanese—we find they participate to a very wide extent in our moral convictions.

It is quite an opposite experience we have when we become acquainted with the moral ideas of contemporary savages, or of

the forefathers of races now civilized. Not only among the original inhabitants of America, Africa, or Australia, but also among the ancestors of civilized races, we find for example that vengeance and cruelty are not looked upon as vices. Everywhere and continually we meet with estimations as to the worth of deeds and qualities of character, but when we go back through the centuries we find to an ever-increasing degree that only such lines of conduct and qualities of character are an object of admiration and praise as are useful, in a self-evident way, either to the smallest tribal community or to the individual man himself. Energy, skill, bravery, shrewdness, these are the oldest virtues. But we, too, regard them as excellencies, although we do not give them the same place in the scale of values which was once assigned them. And when we read descriptions of barbaric customs we must not omit to consider them closely from the point of view from which they were understood by the men who practised them. In that way we shall often find that we also, under that special point of view, must assign a worth to the same lines of conduct.

While in the lowest stages of culture only the closest tribal relationship is taken into moral account, gradually with increasing experience, with rising intelligence, which more and more reveals the consequences of deeds, and with the higher development of the power of sympathy, an ever-widening circle of mankind is taken into account—the tribe, the nation, mankind, all sentient beings.

In these discoveries there is nothing which can reasonably lead to moral scepticism. Should the circumstance that conscience and benevolence have grown through the centuries, that they are a product of evolution and have not always existed, that my own ancestors did not in early times possess them, should these circumstances justify me in discrediting my conscience? Then for the same reason the circumstance that at one time men did not yet exist, or that men sprang from inferior beings would justify contempt for everything distinctively human.

A more general consideration will strengthen our conviction.

*(2.) Good and Evil.*

Up to this point we have limited our attention to human deeds and qualities of human character which are good or bad, which have worth or its opposite. Let us now take into consideration the whole sphere of things which we regard as good or bad, as having worth or not. Health, beauty, riches, friendship, fame are highly valuable. Why do we call such various things good? Why are illness, ugliness, poverty, enmity, disgrace, evils? Why are arts and sciences considered valuable? A good meal, a good shoe, a good path, a good answer—what do these things have in common which induces us to call them good? And what is a bad concert, a bad watch, a bad shot, bad weather, which makes us call them bad?

We are soon convinced that good and bad, valuable and worthless, indicate a relation to something else. Good for somebody, something. Socrates long ago said that he knew no good which was not good for something, or for somebody. The relationship which good and evil indicate is ultimately a relationship to a consciousness, and that not simply an intellectual, but an emotional and volitional consciousness. Just as true and false refer to the intellectual side of human nature, so good and evil refer to the emotional and volitional. Such things have worth and are good as are indirect or direct causes of agreeable states of consciousness, or of the removal and prevention of disagreeable states; and, on the contrary, those things are bad which are the cause of disagreeable states of consciousness, or of the removal and prevention of agreeable states. Instead of agreeable we might say desirable, and instead of disagreeable, repulsive, for to be disagreeable is to be an object of aversion, while everything pleasurable is an attractive force for the will. That state of mind is pleasurable which we seek to retain and to prolong—we prefer its existence to its nonexistence; and that state of mind is painful which we seek to avoid and annihilate, preferring its nonexistence to its existence. And only through pleasure or pain is the will incited to action.

Good is sometimes defined as that which is in some way means to an end. But the end is nothing else than the thing willed, and the means signify simply *the cause of something willed*. Accordingly, even in this definition, the relation implied is to a consciousness.

In general, whatever exists for us must exist in our consciousness. Our states of mind are either painful, indifferent, or pleasant : these distinctions are the most important ones. A thing has not become good by bringing about indifferent or painful states of mind ; nor does it become bad by inducing indifference or pleasure. A thing becomes good only by bringing about satisfied happy consciousness, or by diminishing pain ; it becomes bad only by producing painful states of consciousness, or by diminishing pleasure. Things have worth, are good and evil in this world only in their relation to feeling beings, that is, to satisfied or to unpleasant consciousness. Without this, there can be no interest, no meaning, no distinction of worth in the world ; order becomes as indifferent as disorder, harmony as discord, for what is neither pleasant nor painful is indifferent.

Therefore, in the last instance, we have to turn not to that which is outside of us but to what is within us, and according to the different constitution of our inner mental life the same objects are valued differently ; if we change the constitution of our inward self, what before was good becomes an evil. Over against the same outward things, the feelings of animals react differently according to changed conditions of life, and what is pleasant for one animal and excites desire is to another an object of aversion. The notion of desire is not to be traced back to that of the good, but *vice versa*.

If we analyse any good or evil whatsoever, we immediately, or after a little examination, come upon agreeable or disagreeable states of consciousness, the bringing about or prevention of which ultimately is what first makes the good thing good and the evil evil. If any one mentions a good or evil to us we need only to ask : Why is it good, or wherein does its worth lie ? and if a still further good or evil is brought forward as a consequence of the first,

we need only to repeat the question. In this way we shall come back at last always to pleasure and pain of some kind, felt by some sentient being at some time or other, although it may only be the pleasant or unpleasant feeling of a spectator in contemplating the thing. If we wish to inquire still further, no further answer could be given ; we can simply say that to be good is only another name for being the cause of pleasure, or the prevention of suffering, and that it is therefore meaningless to ask why this is good.

A certain precious stone is valuable to me, says some one. Why ? He answers : Because it is beautiful, viz., because it is the occasion of agreeable æsthetic feelings ; and because it gives me a certain respectability in the eyes of others, viz., it is the occasion of satisfied egoistic emotions ; and chiefly because I can receive in exchange for it a large amount of money. And why is the money a good thing ? Because I can procure by means of it the most various agreeable things, and protect myself from all sorts of disagreeable things.

A certain surgical operation was good. Why ? Because the result of it was to save the patient from a severe illness. And why is it bad to be ill ? Because illness is the cause of disagreeable feelings and prevents agreeable ones, and can shorten life. But why is it a good thing to live and live long ? Because it contains an excess of agreeable over disagreeable states of consciousness, or at least can have this effect. That anything preserves life is an object of knowledge, but it would have no interest to us if we had no feeling ; the loss of a limb or of life itself would be wholly indifferent to us.

Natural science is of worth to mankind. Why ? Because it makes man happy by satisfying his love of knowledge, it heightens his self-respect, it puts an end to many an anxious and baneful creation of fancy, it leads to the perfection of the useful arts, it widens man's dominion over nature, it contracts and dries up the sources of pain, and opens up new fountains of pleasure.

There is much which man admires or recoils from instinctively, but if he will justify himself in regarding a thing as a good or an evil he must go back to feelings of pleasure or pain.

Happy consciousness satisfied with itself is never simply a means, is never desired merely for the sake of something else, but is always an end in itself. It is something which, as Aristotle says, in every successive moment of time is perfect and complete in itself; it is something to which other objects are referred, but itself is referred to nothing else. This is the self-sufficiency of happiness, of which Aristotle speaks. Considered from a purely scientific point of view it is something final and ultimate—it is for science a limiting conception which closes the logical inquiry.

Just as there are many varieties in our mental states, so there are various kinds of satisfaction and pain, and to the same degree there are various good and evil things. Sometimes things are good or evil in relation to our organic or sensuous, sometimes to our emotional, nature. A moral good is such as brings about a morally satisfied state of mind.

The good has often been divided into the useful and the agreeable. Agreeable is that which immediately brings forth pleasure; useful that which produces pleasure after a certain time. It is of course possible that something should be agreeable and useful at the same time. The same may be said of what is disagreeable and injurious. We must distinguish useful and pernicious in this inward mental sense from useful and pernicious in an outward sense: in the latter sense, that is useful which tends to preserve life; that injurious which has a contrary effect. Between the useful and injurious in this sense and the pleasant and painful, there must exist a wide-reaching correspondence, as the theory of evolution shows us. Animal beings do that which is pleasurable, and avoid that which is painful to them; they keep alive if they do what preserves life and avoid what is dangerous. In general, therefore, only those beings keep alive to whom what preserves life is pleasurable and what injures life is painful. This perpetual process of the dying out of creatures to which the dangerous is pleasant, and the useful is painful, must lead to a general coincidence between the dangerous and the painful on the one hand and the useful and pleasurable on the other. But this

coincidence is far from being perfect ; and, indeed, the more complicated the conditions of life are, the less perfect is the coincidence. In the world of human beings, it must, therefore, be the least perfect.

In general, to be good and to have worth means to be the cause of pleasure or of the absence of pain. Accordingly, that has more worth and is better which is the cause of more pleasure or of the prevention of more pain. The relative worth of good things is, therefore, to be estimated according to the quantity of pleasure produced by them, or of the pain averted by them. And a corresponding statement holds good as regards evils.

But things have not only more or less pleasure, or more or less pain, as a consequence ; they often bring about both pleasure and pain : in this case the surplus decides whether a thing is good or bad ; and the greater the surplus is the better, or, on the other hand, the worse. Accordingly those things are good which have more pleasure than pain as their effect, and they are better as this excess is greater. And the same relation holds true in reference to things bad and worse ; the quantity of the worthlessness is determined by the amount of excess of unpleasant feelings. That which decides in comparisons and conflicting claims is always, therefore, the relative amount of pleasure and pain.

Plato's Socrates in the Dialogue "Protagoras" explains that everything so far as it is agreeable is good, and that things are bad only "because they end in pain or rob us of greater pleasure." The painful may be good, however, but only because of the surplus of pleasure, or because a greater pain is kept at a distance ; and an agreeable thing may be bad if it robs us of greater pleasure than it contains, or brings along with it pain which is greater than its pleasure.

If a man regards one state of mind as better than another, although it is less pleasureable, more exact reflection would convince him that he prefers, in fact, not the state of consciousness in itself, but something in its conditions or in its effects.



The greatest possible surplus of satisfied consciousness over painful consciousness in the life of a human being may be called his greatest possible happiness.

It follows from our deliberations, that one must carefully distinguish between what is desired and what is worthy of desire. Everything desired is pleasureable, but may have pain as a consequence—pain far greater than the momentary pleasure. And still those pleasures which cause suffering are often desired, and control human deeds, although the one who yields does himself, in his saner moments—yes, perhaps even in the very moment of choosing—regard the preference of the smaller good as an irrational thing and wrong. It is the mistake of too many men to pay too dearly for their pleasure.

Sometimes the good is set over against the agreeable, and the evil against the painful; but then only momentary feelings are included under pleasure and pain, while by good or evil is meant the enduring cause of continuous or of recurring pleasure or pain. Momentary pleasure may be bought at the cost of long suffering, while a pain that is soon over may be the means of preventing great evil.

Thus far we have spoken of good things in general, and of a comparison between them without distinguishing in reference to whom a thing is good, whether to the individual man himself, or to many, or to all men. We must now turn our attention to this subject.

A thing is good which is a direct or indirect source of pleasure, or is a means of preventing pain. Pleasure and pain exist only in feeling. A thing is good for a given individual if and because it brings him pleasure, the same thing may be bad for another person if and because to him it brings pain. It may be good for many, for a whole community, if it brings pleasure to the whole community. Anything is really good for a given society if it has a lasting beneficial effect, that is, if the sum of its effects is in harmony with the happiness of the society during its whole

existence ; and that is really good for mankind which, in the sum of its effects, is beneficial for present and future humanity.

Now it is of great importance to keep in mind the difference between these two conceptions : good for the individual, and good for society. They are two distinct conceptions and not one ; they may in most cases coincide, that which is really good for the single person will for the most part be good for the community ; but when this is the case and how far this agreement extends cannot be told beforehand, it can only be learned by special investigation of the case in hand. As a fact, this harmony between the welfare of the individual and that of the community becomes completer as the moral constitution of man and the social relations are improved. In general we are safe in saying so much on this matter : when we rule our conduct with the thought of serving the welfare of mankind, we are morally at peace with ourselves ; and in so far, a brave deed, one of self-sacrifice for a just and holy cause, is also a good thing for ourselves and not alone for society. "When a man has conquered the temptations to vice," says Kant, "and is conscious of having done his bitter duty, he finds himself in a state of peace and contentment which may well be called happiness ; by it virtue is its own reward." But whether duty coincides with our greatest happiness is another question. A noble man does not permit this thought to play an important role in his consciousness. The thought of doing his duty in devoting himself to the welfare of mankind fills him ; and he renounces all, except one kind of happiness—the blessedness of a good conscience.

This consciousness which binds him to humanity every man should look upon as his highest good—for it is his ethical good : it is that personal good which has moral worth, and which is in harmony with the welfare of mankind.

Perhaps someone would object that such morally-satisfied consciousness, which is a kind of pleasure, cannot be called a good : for a good is a cause of pleasure ; pleasure may be the point to which a good is referred—it is that which makes a thing good—but can it be called a good itself? So a thing is worthy,

so far as it is a cause of agreeable states of consciousness : but these latter themselves cannot be said to have worth, although they establish the measure of it. Worth is a relative conception but agreeable consciousness is not ; it is that to which things of worth are to be referred. To all this we have simply to answer in general, that it would be regarded as a paradox to assert that pleasure, happiness, blessedness, are not good things and have no worth, or that pain, misery, wretchedness, are not an evil ; and for this reason, that good, evil, and worth, refer not only to pleasure and pain, but also to desire and wish ; and no one doubts that pleasure and happiness are an object of desire, pain and misery of aversion, and, therefore, are good or evil in relation to desire.

From what we have said, it follows that happiness is not simply the gratification of desires ; for by gratifying the actual desires of themselves and others, countless men have made themselves and others miserable. Wishes are not to be gratified simply because they are wishes, but are to be disciplined so as to accord with the lasting and real happiness of the individual and society. "Men must be educated so as to be glad and to suffer at the right time and place."

### *(3.) Universal Welfare as the Standard of Morals.*

The preceding considerations point us to universal welfare as the ultimate criterion, or test, or standard, of moral distinctions. We will recapitulate the principal reasons which have brought us to this discovery, and complete the argument for it.

Why do we demand at all a standard of morals other than our instinctive feelings of approval and disapproval ? Why do we not keep to these ? The reasons are partly practical, partly theoretical. As a matter of fact we are often unable to say what is right and wrong, and it seems to us of the highest importance to decide this question. Our moral feelings impel us to make the right decision, but they often fail to tell us directly what the right way is. They are in need of a guide. How are we to guide them ?

It not seldom happens that the moral judgments of others differ

from our own. How can we come to an agreement? We cannot fall back upon feelings, for theirs decide differently, and why should theirs decide less correctly than ours? How can we set aside that doubt as to the correctness of our judgment, which the prospect of an opposite judgment on the part of others produces? In the natural sciences an appeal is made to something common to all, whereby agreement among investigators is arrived at. Is there not also something common to all in the domain of ethics? And what is that?

We give less authority to the moral opinions of savages than to those of civilized people. How can we justify this discrimination? Why have they not just as much right as we, and more? We cannot answer this question by an appeal to our unreflective moral feelings.

Our moral sentiments often appear to be in no proper agreement among themselves. Is there not any means of bringing them into harmony? Of uniting them into a system without self-contradiction? Is there no universal principle out of which they can be derived?

Toward what are our moral feelings in general directed? Is there no distinction between objects approved and those disapproved by conscience except that they are approved or disapproved? Does conscience approve or disapprove this or that, we know not why? If that were so, would not all moral distinctions then appear as simply groundless and aimless assertions? And would not the difference between good and bad be destroyed? For as a fact, the same things are regarded by different consciences, and, indeed, at different times by the same conscience, as good and as bad. The one moral judgment annuls the validity of the other, if each is something final, from which no appeal can be made. In times of criticism like ours, in which we demand that every authority must receive its sanction from reason as such, men will demand that also the traditional and moral sentiments show their legal certificates from reason. As the men in Socrates' time, they will demand that conduct be guided no longer by instinct, but by insight.

Now, that the general welfare is the principle of moral action, is proved by the examination of the contents of our own moral ideas and those of our fellow men. If we consider the qualities of character which we and others value, *i.e.*, the virtues, we find that they all tend to produce happiness or diminish misery. And if we consider the vices, the qualities of character disapproved by ourselves and others, we shall see that they are all in tendency destructive of pleasure or productive of pain. What do qualities so different as bravery and humility have in common? Why are both virtues? This common mark must at the same time be found in a quality like chastity—although so different from the others—if we are to regard it, too, as a virtue. Now is this common mark anything else than a tendency to bring happiness upon society as well as upon the individual? In like manner we shall be convinced that all duties and rules of conduct recognised as obligatory by ourselves and others advance the welfare of the community.

Especially characteristic are the exceptions to these general rules which the judgment of almost everybody makes. They appear just where it would be hostile to the general welfare to carry out the rule. The single moral precepts are all of value in the general moral judgment, but there exists an essential order of precedence among them. The duty not to kill is surely regarded as more urgent than the duty not to lie. There is a rule of precedence in cases of collision among duties, but the precise determination is only possible when we take as the ultimate criterion the universal welfare. The existence of various degrees of moral good and evil can only be explained if a common principle lies at the basis of the various commandments, and if some classes of deeds conform to this principle in a higher degree than others. Such a principle is the general welfare.

If we look beyond the circle of moral ideas among contemporary civilized nations and take into consideration the morals of people on a lower stage of culture and in other times, we find that that in which their rules agree is the tendency to advance the welfare of society. In this one respect the moral conceptions of

one race and time agree with those of others, and not in any other respect. In points which have no relation to the general security and happiness, the greatest difference prevails. On the lowest stages of culture the moral ideas take into account only a very small society, that of their own tribe, only those actions come under moral control which, in a self-evident way, influence the prosperity of the tribe, and the moral notions of different tribes differ very widely. The higher the state of culture becomes, and the wider the circle of men taken into moral account, the more effectually do the moral regulations help on the welfare of the community, and the greater the agreement that prevails among the moral ideas of different societies. Complete agreement in all important questions, and the moral consideration of all sentient beings, is the ideal goal towards which the evolution of civilization is advancing. Every recognised moral progress is a step towards that goal. We cannot, therefore, say that universal welfare has always been the actual principle of every code of morals. This great principle is rather the last and highest in the growth of human civilization.

The history of moral ideas seems to prove that the greatest changes in them were the effect of changed opinions as to the consequence of deeds upon the welfare of society; they were the fruit of experience. But this process of transformation advances very slowly; the results of the experience of the past are soon authoritative for the in-coming generation; and being handed on for the most part without the reasons being given on which they are based, they are worked over independently only to a very limited degree by the new generation. We cannot wonder then that the clear consciousness of the ultimate reasons for moral judgment is seldom present. And yet in civilized societies the conviction is already generally spread abroad that at least average conformity to moral precepts is the indispensable condition for the security and prosperity of society, and that the earth would be transformed into a hell, or rather that the race would go under, if the rules of morality were transgressed. It is generally admitted that the happiness of mankind is greater, the more widely and the

more fully moral duties are carried out. The answer to the question, "What would happen if everybody acted so?" has from the earliest times been regarded as decisive from the moral point of view.

We are convinced that we need a standard of goodness and perfection for the moral ideas of each individual man and nation. What can this be? How can we discriminate between the positive and the ideal morality unless the standard is the universal welfare?

The result of ethical inductive investigation is in harmony with that of a philosophical examination of the conception of good and of worth in general, and of greater and less worth. When we recognise that everything that we regard as good and as precious, or as bad and vicious, becomes a good by creating joy and preventing suffering, or an evil by producing pain or destroying happiness, then the belief must arise in our minds that the ultimate reason why actions are good or bad is that they stand in causal relation to happiness or misery, and that the worth or unworthiness of qualities of character consists in the guarantee they give of conduct in the future. The circumstance that in all languages the same words are used to indicate worth in general and moral worth in particular—good and evil, gut and schlecht, bonum and malum, agathon and kakon—shows that the connection between these conceptions has always been recognised. In the Dialogue, "Gorgias," Plato makes Socrates teach that "nothing is beautiful in laws and conduct except as it is useful or agreeable, or both."

If a thing becomes good and valuable by bringing about pleasure, it follows that what produces more pleasure has more worth than what produces less pleasure. Therefore what has happy consequences for many is more valuable than what has them for only one—provided the sum total in the former case is greater than in the latter. And what brings happiness to the community as a whole is more valuable than what brings it only to many.

Now the most important factor in the production of happiness or misery for mankind is human character. More, therefore, than to anything else, worth and worthlessness belong to character, to the qualities and dispositions of the will, to virtues and vices. "A single Caligula or Nero has brought forth more evil than a pest or an earthquake." Talents of the intellect do not guarantee benevolent conduct, for they may serve an evil will. Accordingly excellences of character are regarded as in an especial sense good. Often if the good is spoken of only, the moral good is understood by it. Thus it is revealed to us that our instinctive valuations of worth are justified by the deliberations of the purely calculating reason.

If universal happiness is not the general point of reference, and the standard for things good and evil in general and for the good and evil in human conduct in particular, what, then, is that principle? Whatever it be, it would have to determine what relative worth happiness has as compared with other things to which it ascribes worth, for the pursuit of such other things might prove adverse to human welfare. Or will any one presume to deny entirely the significance of happiness?

Through the preceding considerations the following question has also been answered: Why ought I act according to universal welfare? Why? Because such conduct is right and rational. The imperative to further the general welfare is the imperative of my own conscience, but not of mine alone; it is the imperative which receives the support of my reason, but not of mine alone. It is the imperative of developed human nature itself. Whoever does not recognise it as the highest and holiest law, and yet admits the inviolability of duties to mankind and desires to act rationally and morally, does not see what he himself really desires.



## CHAPTER II.

### THE STANDARD OF MORALS.—(*Continued.*)

“ My country is the world,  
My countrymen are mankind.”—W. L. GARRISON.

#### (1.) *The Method of Determining Right Action.*

THE highest criterion of moral action is not the greatest happiness of the smaller number, which indeed has often been the ruling principle of political law-givers, nor is it the greatest happiness of the greatest number in the sense of the majority without regard for the happiness of the minority, but it is the universal welfare, the enduring happiness of all. Actions are right or not, according as they advance or retard the general welfare.

But is it then so easy to calculate the consequence of conduct upon human weal and woe? How difficult it is for us to determine the influence of a given act even on our own life's happiness, how often it is entirely impossible; and now it is demanded of us to determine the consequences of our conduct upon the well-being of all! Bentham requires that, in order to determine the worth of an action, we should make out what the intensity of the pleasure and pain is which it produces; what the duration of these is; how great the certainty and uncertainty that such feelings will actually be brought forth by the action; what the fruitfulness of these feelings is, that is, what the chances are that they will awaken future feelings of the same kind—pleasures when the feeling is one of pleasure, pain when it is a feeling of pain; what the purity of these feelings is, that is, what the chances are that feelings of an opposite nature will not set in as a consequence

of them: pain if they were pleasant, pleasure if they were painful; lastly, what the extent of the feelings is, that is, what the number of persons is whose feelings of pleasure or pain the act influences. In regard to each individual person we must determine in respect to the intensity, duration, certainty, fecundity, and purity of the feelings—the surplus of pleasure over pain or of pain over pleasure which is produced by the act; and then we must add all these sums of pain together and of pleasure together, to find out whether the deed is right or wrong. But is not that demanding too much of any poor child of humanity?

It is often very difficult, yes, impossible, to determine the consequences of an action upon human weal and woe. It certainly is. But what of it? The happiness and misery of mankind are still the most important matter for mankind. Whether it be easy or hard to settle what is for or against welfare, still it will always remain our highest wish to determine the consequences of conduct so far as we can. Probably no one will declare that we cannot settle anything, even now, after thousands of years of human experience. The really serious consequences of action upon the welfare of humanity are not liable to remain concealed; what cannot be settled, and what certain moralists with false splitting of hairs have delighted to bring greatly into the foreground is apt to be of little significance for the welfare of mankind. Is it not childish quibbling, when any one tries to overthrow the doctrine that the highest moral guide to action is to minimise human misery, and to maximise human happiness, with the proof that it is not possible to determine whether the pleasure of the eye or the pleasure of the ear is the more agreeable, or how many times more agreeable each is than the pleasure of taste?

The most important consequences of actions are those which affect life, health, the intellectual and the moral constitution of men. In the highest degree these influence the happiness of mankind. Life is the condition of happiness and of all endeavour toward it. Health is the single guarantee for the continued existence of mankind, and it is the principal source of happiness for the individual. Intelligence is the condition for a successful

struggle against evil, and acquisition of things good. And morality alone guarantees that the existence, health and intellect of the individual will be a blessing and not a curse to others. The healthy, intelligent but immoral man, if it appears to his interest, will sacrifice the life, health, happiness, intelligence and character of his fellow men. It is very clear when one of these points comes into consideration—and in how many do they come forward—that in reference to human happiness it is extremely indifferent whether the pleasure of the eye or of the ear is the more agreeable, and how much they both are more agreeable than the pleasure of the taste. And it is evident that a man ought not to receive pleasure or be spared pain, if thereby he would be disposed to be less considerate to the happiness of others.

Some persons are inclined to set up the striving after perfection in one's self and others as the principle of morals; and although such persons would not, according to all that we have said, be setting up exactly a false principle—for they would not be putting forward anything else than the chief condition of universal welfare—still it would be an entirely indefinite and formal principle. For perfection simply indicates a state of mind which accords with a tacitly accepted idea or aim, a mental equipment which lacks nothing that is necessary to the actualisation of the given aim. A perfect gun is one which fulfils in the best way the object which this instrument serves. A perfect diplomatist is a man possessing in a high degree all the characteristics required of a diplomatist. What those characteristics are is not indicated by the word perfect, and when we say to anyone: You ought to be a perfect diplomatist, it only means you ought to do everything which as a diplomatist you ought to do. Now, whoever sets up as the highest principle of morals, perfection, can understand by that only the perfect constitution of a man as such. But pray what is that? It is such as accords with all the objects with which it ought to accord. With what objects ought it to accord? With perfection? But that would be to argue in a circle. Only the principle of universal happiness could tell us what the perfection of man is. It is such a constitution of his physical and

mental qualities as makes him in the highest degree fitted to advance the welfare and happiness of mankind as a whole ; and moral perfection in particular consists in a disposition of will which accords in the highest degree with universal welfare.

Mankind from the beginning of its existence has been occupied with studying the consequences of human actions. The last results of this experience are expressed in the positive moral precepts which are recognised in society as binding. The most important wisdom of the most enlightened minds, the sublimest moral geniuses, is embodied in these precepts. If, however, the opinions in any society concerning right and wrong deviate from what is really beneficial to it, such a society cannot thrive. Accordingly, respect is due to the moral ideas which prevail in a nation that is civilized and successful in the struggle for existence. Upon closer examination they show themselves to be a collection of regulations which aim at the advancement of the general welfare.

Into this world of moral ideas we are, so to speak, born ; they are handed down to us. They are ours before we discover the underlying principle in them. Now, how will these discoveries affect our thought and action ? To what kind of conduct shall we be moved by the insight that the highest moral imperative is to act according to the interests of universal welfare ? Shall we perhaps, in every case where we must act, apply Bentham's method of calculation and let ourselves be guided by our answer to the question—what feelings of pleasure and pain will be produced by the act, what is their intensity, duration, certainty, fecundity, purity, and extent ? In most cases we shall not have the time to apply this reasoning process ; and even if we wish to calculate, we should probably either allow the time for action to slip away, or we should let the most important consequences go unobserved. No, in that way our wish to act according to the general welfare would not be satisfied. The general welfare would not be furthered by our thinking about it ; but by choosing

the right means to its furtherance. And these we have already learned to a wide extent. For how have we come to discover that highest principle? By analysing our actual moral ideas concerning which we and others entertain no doubt, and by examining our firm conviction as to the rightness of certain classes of actions, convictions which are formulated into special moral laws. Now when we follow these we probably do better—more in accordance with the interests of society—than if in every single case we were to be guided by the detailed calculations of consequences. When, as a result of this general consideration we carry out the special rules of positive morality, we still conform to the highest moral imperative.

But often cases come up which we cannot decide in this way, exactly the cases which induce us to seek for an ultimate standard. A case might be so peculiar that it does not seem to fall under any general rule. Or different precepts may seem to be in conflict. It may seem necessary in a given case not to observe a certain rule of duty. When we are in such a predicament we ought to lay before ourselves the question which Salter puts: "Am I doubting because I secretly want to do differently, or because a really higher duty seems to command it?" Sometimes an honest answer to this question puts an end to all doubt. But if we are convinced that what makes us doubtful is not our egoistic interest which has put on the mask of duty, but that we doubt because general rules of conduct are really in conflict; if none of these seem to be applicable to the given case, we must decide by a direct appeal to the highest principle, by a calculation of the consequences upon the welfare of the community as a whole. That may often be a very difficult and uncertain way to decide, but it is the only possible way to make a rational decision. If among the consequences to be expected there are those which influence the physical and mental perfection of men, these consequences should be given the first place in our consideration. And in order to protect ourselves against selfish partiality and against the mistake of overlooking certain consequences of our conduct we must ask the question: How should we judge if an-

other person acted thus in our place? and : What would the effect upon the general welfare be if everyone in the same situation acted in this way? What is right for us must also be right for every one else in the same situation as we are : that follows from reason itself, it is a simple application of the first principle of logic, the principle of identity. If our action therefore is to be a good one, the general welfare must be furthered by every one's acting in the same way under the same circumstances. In accordance with this consideration we can cast the highest moral imperative into the form : *so act that your relation to the welfare of mankind might be made universal.*

And we must also consider well the power of example. Man is a creature that imitates in good as well as in bad things. The chance of being imitated must always be kept in mind, and we must remember that men seldom take into account the individuality of a given case—and the less intelligent they are the less they take into account ; they regard the conduct of another person as an example for themselves, when their own case is not exactly or even essentially the same. In spite of the dangerous effect our conduct may have on unreasonable imitators, it may, on account of a predominating good, be our duty ; but we must not in the calculation of circumstances leave this danger unregarded. The more prominent the position a man holds in a community, the greater is the power of his example, and the greater his corresponding responsibility.

We often have the experience that special rules of conduct collide with one another, and that in single cases no decision can be arrived at by them ; thus we learn that the laying down of the moral law is not something which took place before our time outside of us, and that we have not simply to take it up passively ; but that we must work with others in the laying down of the moral law, and must be our own law-givers. And we know that if we do not take up this work until the moment of action presents itself, we could easily make very bad work of it, because of the necessity for deciding quickly, and the power which our passions only too often have to pervert our judgment.

But our life is long and we often have hours which we could and ought to devote to meditation upon moral questions, to the building up of the fundamental principles of action, and the impressing them upon our mind. In times like ours, when so much that is old is giving way and so much that is new is coming forward, which as yet has not assumed a fixed form, a special and conscious working over of the solution of moral problems is necessary.

The necessity for deciding in the very moment of action what is right and what not, will always continue to a certain degree ; but it must be our care to diminish the number of such cases as much as possible. In quiet hours we must think over our general situation and consider the circumstances in which we are likely to be placed, and we must, if the generally accepted rules do not appear sufficient, build up new rules for special classes of cases. Our actions will then be determined by rules founded on a direct appeal to the highest principle of morality. For classes of cases—for all cases which have certain circumstances in common—we must set up rules, because it is not possible for us to calculate the effects of a given action in all the countless cases which may come up. We have to answer the question : what is the line of conduct which, if I always observe it in special kinds of cases, would best agree with the universal welfare ? And also the question : what is the conduct which, if every body conformed to it in a given kind of cases, would best further the general welfare ?

To answer these questions is not more difficult, but far easier, than to say what will most contribute to our own welfare. General experiences respecting the customary consequences of actions upon the life and happiness of men are sufficient. We must not only consider the influence of our conduct upon the physical and mental perfection of men, but also Bentham's point of advice ; for, in fact, "intensity, duration, certainty, fecundity, purity and extent" of pain and pleasure are of decisive significance ; but our calculation can be satisfied with general valuations. It may leave out of account idiosyncracies of individual persons as these, deviating from one another in various directions, in the total result cancel each other. According to this reasoning, feelings of

sympathy must be given the first place, for to hold to them is the first condition of securing human happiness. And we must guard ourselves from the only too general mistake of considering too much the intensity in the valuation of worths, and too little the duration. Life does not consist of a few moments, but of days, months, years.

When the time for action comes we must follow the rules prescribed by ripe deliberation, although the case be such that the inadequacy of the rule is perfectly evident. From time to time we must revise our rules with the aid of our continually growing experience, and modify them when necessary.

This, then, is the general effect which the discovery of the highest moral imperative has upon the thought and conduct of a conscientious man: he exercises his understanding more than before in answering moral questions; he regards it as his duty to consider the consequences, to act prudently and to look to the end; he does not judge from the first impression, he does not let the mere appearance rule his feelings, but considers the matter from all sides so as to protect himself from a hasty decision; he is always ready to allow his world of moral ideas to be enriched, for he knows that it is capable and is in need of continual improvement; he brings greater clearness and definiteness, harmony and system, into his ethical views; and more than before he thinks of the interest of mankind, and widens the sphere of his benevolence and feeling of justice, until all mankind are embraced in it.

### (2.) *Further Elucidations.*

When Jeremy Bentham in his *Fragment on Government*, laid it down that the standard of universal happiness—the principle of utility, as he not very aptly called it—must be the criterion of all lawgiving, that all measures of government must be directed toward the happiness of the citizens and must be judged according to their tendency in this direction, Alexander Wedderburn (at that



time Attorney or Solicitor General, afterwards successively Chief Justice of the Common-pleas and Chancellor of England, under the titles of Lord Loughborough and Earl of Roselyn), said : "The principle of utility is a dangerous principle, it is dangerous on certain occasions to consult it." "Yes surely," replied Bentham in his "*Principles of Morals and Legislation*," "it is a dangerous principle, dangerous it really is to the interests—the sinister interests—of all those functionaries, himself included, whose interest it was to maximize delay, vexations and expense in judicial and other modes of procedure, for the sake of the profit extractible out of the expense. In a government which has for its end in view the greatest happiness of the greatest number, Alexander Wedderburn might have been attorney general and then chancellor ; but he would not have been attorney general with fifteen thousand pounds a year ; nor chancellor with a peerage with a veto upon all justice, and with twenty-five thousand pounds a year and five hundred sinecures at his disposal under the name of ecclesiastical benefices, besides et ceteras. But if the danger is not to be understood in this way, what a blunder would it be to call the principle of utility a dangerous principle ; for this is as much as to say—what ? That it is not consonant with utility to consult utility, in short, that not consulting it is to consult it."

Now in fact the secret ground of so many bitter attacks upon the happiness theory is its antagonism to all class interests, and to all partisan and selfish interests ; it is a democratic, not an aristocratic, principle ; it is a humanitarian, not merely a patriotic, principle. "Everyone should count for one, and no one for more than one ;" this maxim of Bentham's does not agree with the "greatest happiness of the smallest number ;" no wonder then if the privileged classes, those whose interest it is that prevailing opinions remain unexamined, and existing mistakes be preserved, persecute a doctrine so dangerous to themselves. No wonder if egotism and pride in all their forms resist it, personal and family egotism, and that of classes, and parties, and nations. But must we not believe that to remodel existing opinions and institutions according to the standard of universal happiness would

continually improve our social and political conditions? Do we not know that already it has caused an improvement in them? Is it contrary to the general welfare to be guided by the general welfare?

Yes, our opponents answer, it is contrary to utility to consult utility. We cannot calculate what effect actions may have upon the happiness of mankind; it is impossible because of the infinite complication of human affairs, the variety in the emotional constitution of individuals, and of the same individual at different times, and because our desires pervert our judgment. We cannot calculate the effects; and in attempting to achieve what is impossible, we commit baneful mistakes. Let us follow, without deliberation and without calculation, our moral instincts; let us observe strictly the rules recognised in society; then, and only then, will our conduct be of service to society.

This objection is in a certain respect only one more proof in favour of the happiness principle; it shows how indispensable the principle is, since even its opponents, when attacking it, must fall back upon it. "When a man attempts to combat the principle of utility," says Bentham, "it is with reasons drawn, without his being aware of it, from that very principle itself. His arguments, if they prove anything, prove, not that the principle is wrong, but that according to the application he supposes to be made of it, it is misplaced." The objection, if valid, would not prove the principle to be false, but that the right way to observe it, is to obey our moral instincts or established rules—but then, indeed, the principle would lose all practical significance.

But suppose our moral instincts in deciding a question leave us in the lurch—suppose various rules conflict—when others hold things at variance with our precepts, how shall we assure ourselves that ours are right, and convince them? Wherein shall we recognise a moral reformer as such, how prove the new rules which he sets up? Is there no objective criterion to which we may in such cases appeal? Or do you know a better one, a clearer, more comprehensible, more definite principle than that of universal welfare?

You yourself admit, you even announce with the greatest em-

phasis, that the greatest conformity to the recognised rules of morality furthers the general happiness—it advances it more than can be done in any other way; you admit that the transgression of recognised rules is adverse to the general happiness—more so than anything else. But if this is certain, if this really can be settled, then the difficulty of settling what is an advantage to mankind, and what not, is easily surmounted, and it must be possible to calculate the essential effects of action.

We have already answered the objection, that it is contrary to utility to consult utility. The objection is based on the supposition that before each separate act we must calculate its effect; if this were the case the objection would be perfectly justified. But this presupposition is unfounded. Our actions, with rare exceptions, are to be guided by our rules, which we do not construct in a moment of decision, but simply know and apply. These rules are partly those general ones handed down to us, which were formed by “the wisdom of every age and the experience of the past,”—partly they are established by ourselves in our most thoughtful hours. The less man has the necessary time to construct rules, and the more reason he has to mistrust his own intellectual power, the less will he dare, if he is conscientious, to make modifications of the traditional rules, and the more he will follow his mental instincts without deliberating and without calculating. But to demand that a man should never calculate the consequences of action, but always should follow his moral instincts, would be equivalent to stamping hasty judgment concerning moral questions as a merit, to the setting aside of the command to do well and to abstain from evil. And to deny to everyone the right to subject the traditional code of morals to the test of his own reason, and to carry forward consciously the moral work of the past, would be the same as to forbid him the highest moral progress—the improvement of his own moral ideal. Society should possess organs devoted to the task of determining the conditions of earthly happiness, and enforcing them—just as from a former time organs more or less shattered have been handed down to us, which prescribe and impress upon us

the conditions of a more than earthly blessedness. The moral reformer will always start from the existing moral convictions; but will show that they have a wider application than is generally recognised; he will bring into esteem special rules which follow from the universal principles; he will emphasise the inviolability of duties which are perhaps generally regarded as such, but the high significance of which has not been sufficiently brought to the consciousness of people.

It has been said to the believers in universal happiness that they are too much disposed to make exceptions to the general rules of morality. But is it not a duty to prefer the higher duty to the lower, and thus to make exception to the lower? Or does anyone deny that there are higher and lower duties and that these may fall into collision? Man has duties toward his family, but also toward the State, and toward mankind; ought he not to fulfil his duties toward the two latter, although his family as well as he himself might suffer by it? He must make exceptions—the question is only whether he should make exception of the one or of the other rule. Whoever demands that the exceptions be not determined by the principle of universal happiness, does he demand that they be determined by the interest of the smaller circle—that, for example, the man of science may hide from mankind a truth discovered, provided the announcement of it would damage the situation of his family? If there be any justification for the reproach of making exceptions, it could only be for making too many exceptions, or such as ought not to be made, as being against the public welfare. But then it is not a reproach which touches this principle, but only the persons who apply it incorrectly—who have insufficient insight into the case in question, or who let themselves be misled, by self-love or passion, into making exceptions in their own favour without regard to the injury of others.

A similar objection to this principle is that it sanctions the doctrine that the end justifies the means. If this objection is to have any weight, it must mean that to the bringing about of a worthy end means are chosen the consequences of which are

baneful, although not immediately perceptible as such, because distant and only indirectly harmful. It is an objection against the misapplication of the criterion.

Its true application is in the recognition of the rules : "We must not do evil that good may come of it," "To be right we must go the right way," "As the end so must the means be," "To the better end belong irreproachable means," and "Bad means tear up by the roots what they pretend to plant." The same is true of the objection that this principle would justify us in treating a man simply as a means. But that the interest of the individual must be subordinate to the interest of society as a whole is quite generally admitted. The objection can therefore only mean that the interest of the individual may be too little taken into account, that the sum total of well-being in the world would be greater if his interest were taken more into account—in other words, that it contradicts a greatest-possible-happiness principle to disregard the individual person.

What right have you, it is asked of the supporters of the happiness principle, to set up the maxim that everyone should count for one and only one? How do you know that the one can be exactly as happy or unhappy as the other? Might not the strong justify their oppression of the weak by saying that they were capable of greater happiness than the weak, and that the happiness of these therefore need not be regarded as much as their own? To this we have simply to answer, that bad men have never been at a loss to justify their conduct—whether they have fallen back upon the principle of utility or upon any other. It needs not to be settled whether one man is capable of as great happiness or misery as another, or which man is capable of a greater or which of a less amount of happiness. But it is sure that the baseness of regarding one's own claim to happiness, or that of one's intimate friends, as higher than that of others would bring endless trouble into the world—as it has, in fact, already brought—and it is sure that the only means of furthering the happiness of mankind is to count everyone for one, and no one for more than one.

But would it not follow from this maxim, others ask, that under no conditions could man care more for his friend, his brother or his father than for any indifferent stranger? If a man should disappoint the most natural expectations and should care so much for men whose conditions and true needs he is not acquainted with and should neglect others with whose circumstances he is intimately associated, would it not cause an immeasurable injury to the public? Is the public welfare not helped most effectually by everyone devoting his own energies generally to a small circle, and, the circumstances being the same, preferring those nearest to him? And is it not necessary to think most often of one's self? Would not the human race go under if every one thought always of the welfare of others and never of his own? But this is evidently no objection to the maxim that, theoretically considered, the happiness of another man has the same worth as my own, or as that of any other one person; it only proves that if I am better able to make one man happy than another it is my duty to do so, for only in that way should I contribute to the greatest possible happiness.

Strive for the greatest happiness of all! Shall the criminal, then, go unpunished, or if we do punish him, must we have regard to his greatest happiness? And if every one is to count for one, and none for more than one, are we to treat the noblest man on earth in the same way as the most ruthless, the most diligent in the same way as the laziest? To this the answer is: The commandment to further universal welfare is not a demand that everybody be made happy, which would be to demand the impossible; but it is simply the requirement that our conduct accord with the greatest possible happiness of all. If such were the nature of human beings, that the happiness of no one being came in competition with that of any other, that is to say, if the happiness of each, or of any one, could receive increase to an unlimited amount without having the effect of producing decrease in the happiness of any other, then the above expression (the greatest happiness of all), might serve without limitation or explanation. But on every occasion the happiness of every

individual is liable to come into competition with the happiness of every other. Bentham therefore preferred the formula, the greatest happiness of the greatest number. But if the former may give rise to misunderstandings, the latter may still more do so, as it suggests that the happiness of the smaller number is not to be taken into account. The precept to conform with the greatest possible happiness of all declares that, according to possibility, all ought to be considered ; that therefore the happiness of the most insignificant human being must not be diminished except when it is necessary in order to prevent a greater injury to others, and that if an encroachment upon the happiness of a man must be made, it dare not be greater than is absolutely necessary. The highest moral commandment forbids the torture even of the most dangerous criminal. It forbids our punishing him simply in order to punish him, or simply because crime has been committed. In contents it is nothing more or less than the christian commandment of universal love, and requires like this, a rational carrying out. And the precept, that every one is to count as one and no person as more than one, holds good within the limitation—so far as the welfare of the community is not thereby injured.

It is true that the effort to act in accordance with universal happiness has often produced great mischief ; it has often induced men to apply bad means to good ends, to make exceptions which were disadvantageous to the public well-being, to satisfy their self-love or their passions while they fancied they were furthering the greatest happiness. And it is further true that the objection is not overthrown by saying that those cases are only false applications of the fundamental principle. If this principle is to be recognised as the criterion of morality, its influence not as it should be, but as it actually is and will be, must be a blessing—a greater blessing than the influence of any other moral principle—and this we must by all means maintain.

If it has often done harm to consult the principle of universal

welfare, it has surely done incomparably more harm not to consult it. If the thought of universal welfare, which excludes in its very nature all egoism, has led to an egoistic course of conduct, surely the habit of not thinking of it has more often led to that evil. If the purpose of serving the greater good by means of an exception to a general rule has led men in a direction contrary to the greater good, so surely the observance of special rules, when apparently in conflict with the greater good, has not seldom had the same effect. If the habit of summoning the recognised authorities by each before the judgment seat of his own reason has been against the general interest, so surely has been the habit of obeying blindly the established authorities. Should we so mistrust human reason that in this the highest affair of life we should count its influence as on the whole injurious? It is the permanent and peculiar influence of reason as over against instinct, which is treated of in this whole question. Should we not believe that reason will help mankind forward in this domain as in every other? Shall we not believe that it will continually become better acquainted with the principal sources of weal and woe, with the causes which on the average will bring a great excess of pleasure over pain, or of pain over pleasure into the world. The more widely intelligence spreads—and it is the duty of society to care for the intellectual cultivation of all its members—the smaller becomes the danger of a false application of our criterion; but the more general becomes the need of acting from insight, and not simply from tradition, or on authority, or from impulse. Whoever, regarding the principle of universal welfare as dangerous, tries to induce men to throw it aside, will not be able to root out the demand on the part of thinking beings for rationally determined action, but will only bring about this: that men will make their own welfare, instead of the universal welfare, the criterion of action. Therefore let us attempt to set aside erroneous opinions concerning human well-being, not by teaching something else than a doctrine of well-being, but rather by teaching a better, more comprehensive and enlightened view of well-being.

Although the universal recognition of this doctrine would not



immediately bring about universal welfare, nevertheless the society might be counted happy which consciously recognised it as decisive in all disputed questions of morals and politics, and gave it the social sanction.

The appeal to this principle would not always bring about perfect unity; but it would do so incomparably oftener than to inculcate obedience to conventional phrases and watchwords and unjustified sympathies and antipathies. What may be beneficial to the community is a question of fact respecting which it is just as possible to attain a general agreement as on any other question of scientific investigation. Whoever of us refrains from using this surest test of the goodness or badness of laws and customs, must take care that he does not thereby play into the hands of those evil statesmen who, in the prosecution of their selfish and socially dangerous aims, long for nothing more than the setting aside of every criterion which would lead to serious and exact decisions. The statement that our present order of society is a creation for the sake of a few, and, therefore, does not need to find any justification in the services which it renders to the many, is the best imaginable excuse which one can put into the hands of egoistic and class interests, by which to mock justice. How different sound the words of Emperor Frederick's messages to the Prussian Parliament. "Following in the path of our renowned father, we shall strive for no other goal than the happiness and welfare of the country."

Sometimes those who will not admit the standard of universal happiness in moral questions are willing to recognise it in political questions. But if it can settle what is right in laws and institutions, ought it not to be allowed to determine what is right in the conduct of an individual person? And, on the other hand, if the individual is encouraged to follow in his private action his moral instincts without deliberating and calculating, will he be apt to give up this habit, which is so comfortable, when it is his duty to pass judgment upon public affairs?

If the principle of welfare be assumed, everything, it is often said, which furthers human prosperity must be moral: the inven-

tions of printing and the steam engine were, therefore, in the highest degree moral acts. But here there is simply a confusion of two very different conceptions: moral and right. Moral, implies a judgment upon the disposition of the person and thing: the good is moral when it testifies to a moral character, and such characters are moral as are a spring of universally benevolent deeds. Whether the discovery of the steam engine was a moral deed we cannot know unless we are acquainted with the constitution of the inventor and the nearer circumstances of the case. But we may ask the question: was it right to make known the invention of the steam engine? Thus someone once asked: supposing he should have invented a machine by which some commodity could be better and more cheaply produced, would it be right to introduce such a machine if other manufacturers and their employes would, perhaps, be injured by it? Now the supreme commandment is: so act that it would be to the advantage of mankind to make such conduct universal. Would it be to the benefit of mankind if all such inventions were given over to oblivion? That would bring industrial progress to a stop; but does not human prosperity require this progress? Another similar objection is this, the father of a family, or a man in a public position who could only be replaced with difficulty, if he tries to rescue a drowning man by greatly risking his own life does a thing that is not moral, for the probability that he will injure the community is much greater than that he will increase the sum of happiness. He does not at any rate act immorally, for such a deed is not a proof of an immoral but rather of a most highly benevolent character. But under some circumstances the deed may not be right. Who would doubt but that such an act was wrong for the elderly feeble statesman, whose life at the given time was of immeasurable importance to his country?

Another blundering comment is that a "soldier who remains at his post of battle after it is lost, is useful neither to himself nor to the cause he serves. By his deed happiness is only diminished, and no happiness is created." Is this indeed so? Healthy common sense says: If each one in the army leaves his post as

soon as to do so seems agreeable to him, such an army would probably be overcome in the first attack, and a state protected by such an army would be doomed to destruction.

Sometimes the objection is raised that, if universal welfare be the ultimate rule of morals men must have been aware of it, and must have done or approved right actions and have left undone or blamed wrong actions, consciously on the ground that they advanced or retarded the general weal. Whereas the thought of the beneficent or detrimental effects of an action that men praise or blame is very far from their minds, they have a quite direct consciousness that the act is good or bad, and is to be done or left undone. "We shrink from stealing or lying as we shrink from burning our finger." Truthfulness and purity are not practised for philanthropic purposes.

The fact referred to is beyond doubt; but it does not prove what it is intended to prove. It is true that men when they explain a deed as right or wrong often do not think of its effects upon universal happiness; but still it is not simply a fortunate accident that exactly those acts are regarded as moral which do advance universal happiness, and that those are forbidden as wrong which are detrimental to it, while no one thinks those acts ought to be done which damage the public weal. It is not merely a fortunate accident but there exists a causal connection here. When we pass beyond the circle of any individual man's consciousness and study the history of moral ideas, we find that originally experiences as to the usefulness or detrimental effects of any kind of conduct were the reason why it was regarded as right or wrong. Succeeding generations were brought up to follow the rules of conduct acquired by experience without receiving the grounds or aims of the rules; the acts received names which imply praise or blame, and thus after a time men acquired with the mere learning of language a definite habit of moral judgment. Still, in a civilized community, there is always present to a certain degree a belief in the social benefit of moral regulations; and it

could scarcely happen that anyone after full deliberation would regard a deed as right although he was convinced that the general weal of society would suffer from it. If anyone should say that moral heroes are exactly the ones who do not act with the conscious purpose of sacrificing themselves to the welfare of mankind, this fact, provided it were a fact, would, according to what we have said above, prove nothing ; but the obligation to prove is on the side of the man who makes the statement. Have the deliverers of mankind, not aimed to deliver mankind ? And what does it mean to deliver, except to free them from misery and make them blessed ? And is blessedness anything else than the highest happiness ? Whether the drama of happiness or unhappiness, which the deliverers had in mind, is to be enacted on this earth or in heaven or in the world below, whether the ideas which they entertained are correct or erroneous is not to the point, the question to be answered is : did they wish to deliver mankind ?

“Happiness cannot be the moral aim because it is not attainable.” This is only an objection against a word chosen to describe a thing. Happiness is the name for an ideal, for an unbroken series of states of mind agreeable to the highest degree. But man may approach the ideal more or less nearly ; and no one can deny that a distinct conception is contained in the expression : the greatest possible surplus of pleasure over pain (whether it be called happiness or not). Every one who understands the words admits that he wishes it for himself and that every lover of his kind wishes it for the whole race, and no one ought to forget that the first condition for increasing happiness is to decrease misery, and that in the world a terrible amount of misery exists.

For many reasons it is advisable in a popular description of the highest moral principle not to choose the term happiness, but welfare ; but at the same time one should never forget that welfare signifies nothing other than the greatest possible approximation to universal happiness, “welfare” is the name for the weal of all the members of society, and that “weal” is nothing else than the

greatest possible excess of pleasure over pain. A governmental regulation can therefore never be for the general welfare if its effect is not to heighten the happiness of its present and future subjects. It is necessary to remember this meaning, since men sometimes seek to justify pernicious regulations on the ground that the interest of the state, or reasons of state, demand them. In reality such regulations, if they serve any one, serve not the state, or society, but a certain class.

"Happiness is something transient, not an enduring thing, but only what is ever renewing itself." But what of that? Life itself and consciousness are always something that is becoming, and is passing away, and is never an enduring thing. Perhaps there is no sense in Plato's question: which is for the sake of the other, existence, for the sake of what is about to be; or, what is about to be, for the sake of existence? But if there is, still we should surely have to answer: being is for the sake of that which is in the process of being, although Plato declares the opposite answer to be self-evident. Being is for the sake of the becoming; for only through feelings, a thing that is becoming, does anything in the world receive value and meaning.

"There is a thought," says a recent writer, "which we shall always find unendurable even though we think its realization is to be postponed thousands of years. It is, that mankind with all its intellectual and moral work will vanish from the face of the earth and leave not a trace behind, and that absolutely nothing, not even the memory of it in any consciousness, will remain." In fact the immortality of the human race seems to be a presupposition of many moral theories; but how are the truths of astronomy related to it? Will the sun not grow cold, and will not all life on the earth become extinct? Probably there will always be life on the countless planets of the countless suns; nevertheless life in our world is in all probability a limited one. But our moral life does not find its final aim in the remote future, this aim on the contrary can be attained every moment. The question as to the duration of life has no moral significance, so far as man cannot control it.

“Happiness is a thing morally indifferent.” But what is the meaning of this? Simply that a man is not moral because he is happy. But should it be a matter of moral indifference that he aims at the happiness of his fellow-being? Or should a man feel morally indifferent to the fact that he has destroyed human happiness by his conduct? Why is benevolence a virtue, cruelty a vice, if happiness and misery are things morally indifferent?

Immanuel Kant, to whom men refer, declared in his old age, that he should depart from the world with the joyful consciousness of having done no one intentionally any harm, or brought upon any one unhappiness.

“Happiness is an unworthy object to strive for.” Those who say this understand by happiness one’s own individual happiness. A man, they think, should pursue higher objects than his own, such as relate simply to his own transient self; he must be able to practise self-denial, to sacrifice himself for a good and noble cause. But the principle of universal welfare, no less than any other moral principle, demands self-denial, the overcoming of selfish impulses, through motives of duty and human love; it requires that in all collision between them individual self-interest must give way to the general interest—it simply sees nothing to approve in an aimless sacrifice of one’s own happiness, which serves no man. And a moral man will not think it something unworthy, to strive after universal happiness. How should we feel, if by self-sacrificing conduct we diminished the suffering of our fellow-men, and increased their true well-being? Can anyone think of any higher object for which he would be ready to sacrifice his life, than the true lasting welfare of mankind? When the honourable is set over against the useful, it is when by the honourable is understood that which is truly useful to the community, by the useful that which is in conflict with the lasting good of society, although to its immediate advantage, or for the selfish interest of a few.

It also happens that persons misled, by the oft used word, pleasure, understand by happiness only sensuous enjoyment. But is man a brute? Happiness is built up out of all and every

kind of satisfied consciousness in men, out of all and every kind of feeling which is not indifferent or painful. The happiness which a man finds in his family, in working for humanitarian ends, artistic and scientific activity, is it something unworthy? All the highest enthusiasm for the good things of human life is a form of happiness.

Do those who regard the welfare of mankind as the moral criterion fail to appreciate the incomparable worth of virtue? The exact opposite is the case: they look upon it as the best and most precious of all things. But how could any one prove that virtue is a good without referring it to the deep inward satisfaction, the moral happiness which a well-ordered life brings to a man, or to the feelings of moral joy and elevation which the well-ordered life of another awakens, or to the other consequences of right conduct upon happiness? The care of the soul, the moral as well as the intellectual improvement of one's own mind, and of the minds of others, is the first commandment which follows from the injunction to serve the weal of humanity. Be ye perfect follows from it. And if the Kingdom of God be understood as an ideal, truly good and holy, kingdom on earth, then our criterion also says: Seek ye first the Kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all other things shall be added unto you.

The apprehension which some have expressed, that through the recognition of the furtherance of universal welfare as the supreme moral law the special moral precepts might lose the high respect accorded them, is unfounded. The observance of them is, with rare exception, the necessary means to the attainment of that welfare; how then in the consciousness of those who are penetrated with the conviction that this aim is holy, could the thought of the ways which lead to it help being surrounded with strong feelings?

Is the principle of universal happiness too high for humanity? It is sometimes said that the demand that men should always act from motives of universal benevolence or of duty is too severe. But to this John Stuart Mill replied: "This is to mistake the very meaning of a standard of morals, and to confound the rule of action with the motive of it. It is the business of

ethics to tell us what are our duties, or by what test we may know them, but no system of ethics requires that the sole motive of all we do shall be a feeling of duty; on the contrary, ninety-nine hundredths of all our actions are done from other motives, and rightly so done." The happiness principle does not require that all the main-springs of action should be replaced by a single one, but it requires that conduct should conform to the general welfare; it does not demand that we should always act from motives of duty, but only that we should not act in violation of it. It declares that narrower benevolence, like love for wife and child, and delight in artistic or scientific activity and self-interest, are not bad motives, and that actions which spring from them are not bad; on the contrary, it regards these impulses as most desirable, in cases where they will with most effect increase the general happiness. Listen once more to John Stuart Mill: "The great majority of good actions are intended, not for the benefit of the world, but for that of individuals, of which the good of the world is made up; and the thoughts travel not beyond the particular persons concerned, except so far as is necessary to assure himself that in benefiting them he is not violating the rights—that is, the legitimate and authorized expectation—of any one else. The multiplication of happiness is . . . the object of virtue. The occasions on which any person (except one in a thousand) has it in his power to do this on an extended scale, in other words, to be a public benefactor, are but exceptions."

Another objection is that, as long as the nature of things remains the same, the relation of happiness to misery in the world will also remain the same. But should we not bestir ourselves to change it as much as possible? Cannot men—every one if he wishes—make others happier or less happy? The objection, it seems, proves too much. If it proves anything it would overthrow the duty of benevolence, and justify the most ruthless, selfish, and cruel conduct. Why might not one as well say that probably so long as the nature of things remains the same, the relation of virtue to vice will always remain the same, and that therefore it is foolishness to strive for moral perfection, and the



realization of moral ideals of any kind whatever? And why cannot the nature of things bring about a growth of happiness? It permits human knowledge to increase, knowledge of the sources of happiness; and this leads to corresponding action, to a suitable change of conditions, and changed circumstances bring about different effects. Finally, to certain believers in the theory of evolution, not the happiness of mankind, but the preservation of its existence, is the principle of morality. "Aim for the preservation of the species," is the true categorical imperative. Pleasure and pain are simply the means nature provides for the preservation of the species; they are the only means through which nature brings about the practice of life-preserving, and abstinence from life-damaging actions; the true final aim of all impulses is not pleasure, and the avoidance of pain, not the greatest possible happiness of the greatest number, but simply life, the most prolonged existence possible for the greatest number. "Speaking scientifically, the self-contained happiness of a human unit is of no more account than the blossoming of a flower or the breaking of a wave; it was and is not, it came and went, and the rest of the world felt no change." These evolutionists often, without being fully conscious of it, start with a teleological view of the world; they assume that the course of nature is regulated according to purposes, and on this opinion of theirs they try to found their theory of Ethics. But we shall be convinced that the teleological view of the world cannot be justified scientifically, and that even if it could be, it would be ethically irrelevant.

Nature has no purposes, for she has no will; to her not only happiness, but also the preservation of the species is a matter of indifference. And as concerns mankind men do not feel that self-preservation merely as such is the highest good. Not only is life not the highest of good things, but to very many life and self-preservation appear not as a good thing at all; twenty to thirty thousand men every year, in Europe alone, take their own life. Mere existence is not a good, much less is it the highest good; existence, if it is a bad existence, may be the greatest evil. Even in hell existence is said to be found, and

according to certain ancient theologians, eternally prolonged existence for the greatest number. Should we really then leave out of account conscious feeling, everything therefore which ultimately and alone gives worth and significance, and take note of human beings only in so far as they have a vegetative existence?

It goes without saying that if the happiness of mankind is to be advanced, then before all else, their existence and health must be secured. But if by the health of society something else is understood than a society consisting of healthy individuals it is evident that the expression health is only a metaphor and one the sense of which is by no means clear; and to put this metaphor in the place of the universal happiness principle cannot be regarded as an improvement. If anyone should say that by the health of society, such a social condition is understood as would secure health not only of the bodies but of the minds of its members, we should have simply to reply that it is not advisable to choose the metaphor, health of mind, as the characterization of the highest ethical criterion. By health of mind is understood, some say, a development of the whole man as a mental being. But is that in man to be developed which—as for example, cruelty—is not good, which is contrary to the interests of society? The dispositions born in us are not always such that their further development is desirable, and in what degree should they be developed? All to the same amount? By health of mind must be understood such a constitution of man's mental nature as would be advantageous to the health and happiness of himself and others; in other words, a constitution of mind which would be favourable to universal welfare. When it comes to practical application, those who regard the happiness and those who regard the permanent life of mankind as the criterion, will not disagree; for whatever furthers the life of mankind will increase human happiness.

### (3.) *The Worth of Life.*

Some—happily there are not many such, and not all who advocate the doctrine truly believe in it—some have really been of

the opinion that all life predominantly is suffering, that what enhances life enhances suffering. And from this opinion they infer the following : Either it must be right and our duty to work for the extinction, or the lessening and shortening of life, or else pain and pleasure cannot be the standard of the value of life. The second part of this alternative must be excluded ; pain and pleasure are, as we have seen, the final measure of the value of things ; therefore on the presupposition that all life involves a surplus of pain, only the other possibility could come into question : that it is a duty to diminish life. Is the presupposition which makes this monstrous inference necessary, correct ?

Vanity of vanities, says the Preacher, vanity of vanities ; all is vanity. . . .

But, on the other hand, these are the words of the Psalmist : " Make a joyful noise unto the Lord, all ye lands. Serve the Lord with gladness : come before his presence with singing, for the Lord is good ; his mercy is everlasting ; and his truth endureth to all generations."

And yet Socrates says : " Now if you suppose that there is no consciousness, but a sleep like the sleep of him who is undisturbed even by the sight of dreams, death will be an unspeakable gain. For if a person were to select the nights in which his sleep was undisturbed even by dreams, and were to compare with this the other days and nights of his life, and then were to tell us how many days and nights he had passed in the course of his life better and more pleasantly than this one, I think that any man, I will not say a private man, but even the Great King, will not find many such days and nights when compared with the others. Now if death is like this, I say that to die is gain ; for eternity is then only a single night."

And Lenan says, in his poem, " At the Bed of a Child : "

" Sleep, rock gently, my fair little one.  
Through the thin covering of thy veil  
She smiles ; so smiles a rose through twilight's  
Fragrant stillness.

Rock her gently, lay her lightly  
 In thy sterner brother's arms,  
 His, through whose thicker veil no smile  
 For us shines more.

For with drawn dagger for my darling  
 Trouble waits at childhood's portal,  
 Where peace departing kisses her,  
 And vanishes for ever."

And Heine says :—

" Sleep is good, but death is better—yet  
 Best 'twere never to be born."

And Voltaire says : " Man is a very miserable being that has a few hours of rest, a few minutes of satisfaction, and a long succession of days of pain in his short life. The whole world admits it ; the whole world says so, and it is right." And Schopenhauer says : " All life is essentially suffering." " Necessity and ennui are the whips which keep up the motion of the spinning top," and " Whatever any one may say, the happiest moment of the happiest man is nevertheless that of falling to sleep ; as the unhappiest moment of the unhappiest man is that of waking." " In fact there is nothing else to be set up as the end of our existence than the knowledge that it would be better not to be." But Bentham says : " Taking the whole of mankind together, on which side of the account does the balance lie? Beyond dispute, it is on the side of well-being." And Adam Smith declares : " Take the whole earth at an average, for one man who suffers pain or misery, you will find twenty in prosperity and joy, or at least in tolerable circumstances." And Rousseau says : " Though it is not always an evil to die, still it is very seldom an evil to live." And finally Darwin : " Happiness decidedly prevails, though this would be very difficult to prove." He attempts to give a biological proof.

Who is right ? Now we do not doubt that if we follow Rousseau's advice, and do not listen to those, who, like many rich persons, and many writers, are in exceptional and unhealthy con-

ditions, but ask those who constitute the greatest number—honest citizens, and artisans, and farm labourers—we shall receive an answer very similar to the last mentioned judgment of that truly wise man. The great majority of men, as few will doubt, regard life as a great good ; and even such as in their own case find more pain than joy, seldom believe that a surplus of suffering is the lot of the world in general. And very many will agree with Rousseau when he says that the mere sense of life is a feeling of satisfaction, which alone would be sufficient to make existence precious. Only of the ancient Gauls is it related that they celebrated births with lamentations, and burials with songs. It is not simply, as has been affirmed, the instinctive impulse to live, and the fear of death, which lead to a favourable view of life, for even those who have been perfectly ready to die have regarded life as precious, and have looked back upon its course with contentment.

The greatest misfortune is a sour, morose spirit. The difference between light-heartedness and a gloomy disposition Schopenhauer explains in his "Aphorisms of Practical Wisdom." "It is," he remarks, "to be traced back to the very different sensibility in different men, to agreeable and disagreeable impressions, in consequence of which one laughs at what almost brings desperation to another ; and, indeed, sensibility to agreeable impressions is apt to be the weaker, the stronger the sensibility is to disagreeable impressions, and the reverse. Where there is equal possibility of a happy or of an unhappy issue of events, the man of gloomy disposition will get angry and grumble if things turn out ill, but if they turn out well he will not rejoice ; the man of light-hearted temperament, on the contrary, will not get vexed or complain if the issue be unfortunate, but if it be a happy one, he will rejoice. If out of ten chances the gloomy man is successful in nine, he does not rejoice for these, but is put out because of the one failure ; while the light-hearted man, in the reverse case, will console and cheer himself up by the thought of the one hit."

Now, Schopenhauer, the great writer about the pain of the world, was just such a morose person ; and it appears that, in

most cases, an unhappy temperament is the real source of a dark view of life. Men of this stamp are, in fact, "so constituted that they could not be happy in any kind of a world they might be put into." Another cause of bitterness toward life often joined with this one is a lack of love; many pessimists have lived solitary, loveless lives. And we shall not easily come across a man who, in his heart, lives the life of mankind, rejoices in their joy, and makes their hopes his hopes, and yet holds a bad opinion of nature and life. "The true cosmopolitan," said a young Russian, "is in no danger of suffering from the sense of moral hollowness. The interests of mankind are so various, and so infinitely precious in comparison with his own, that there remains to him no free moment in which to complain about the emptiness of human life. Absolute pessimism is the product of the vanity and egotism of the pessimistic philosopher." One of the causes of pessimism is a lack of regular work. "Nothing is more pitiable," says Goethe, "than a well-to-do man without work; the most delightful of gifts disgust him."

Some pessimists have tried hard to show that their doctrine is not simply a philosophy of their own moods, but the result of scientific investigation; but in reality their attempts to establish their opinion have been, as James Sully, in his valuable work on "Pessimism," has thoroughly proved, extremely unscientific and superficial. Quite characteristic of Schopenhauer is the following:—"After all, it is entirely superfluous to contend whether there is more of good or of evil in the world: for the mere existence of evil decides the matter; as it can never be destroyed through accompanying or consequent good, and also never counterbalanced: 'a thousand pleasures are not worth one agony' (Petrarca). . . . Therefore, although there were of evil a hundred times less in the world than there is, still the mere existence of it would be sufficient to establish the truth, which may be in various ways, although always somewhat indirectly, expressed: namely, that we should not rejoice at the existence of the world, but grieve; that its non-existence would be preferable to its existence; that it is something which at bottom ought not to be."

The mere existence of pain, then, is said to be sufficient to establish the statement that the world might better not be ! If I should have the toothache, although only for a minute long, it would follow that my life might better not be, although in all the rest of its course it were full of undisturbed blessedness—yes, the fact would be sufficient to justify the statement that the non-existence of the world were to be preferred to its existence ! A fanatic of optimism might equally well affirm :—My life would be worth having if, in long years of agony, for one minute only, pure joy were granted me, for the suffering of pain through millions of minutes would be off-set by the delight of one ; yes, although all mankind lived, as it were, in eternal torture, if but one moment of joy were given but once to one man, this would be sufficient to justify the statement that it is better for mankind to be than not to be. If we will not yield to our love of arguing, but will honestly question human nature, we shall see that the worth or insignificance of a thing for us is determined by the surplus of pleasure over pain or pain over pleasure, because a given degree of joy will be counterbalanced by an equal degree of pain, and *vice-versa*. “There are,” says Sully, “two methods of procedure by which to produce such a balance between two opposed feelings. The first and simplest method is to bring up the two opposed feelings at the same time. In this case, one will find that if they are of equal vividness, they tend mutually to neutralise each other ; that is, to produce a state of feeling the worth of which is zero. That is, I believe, a fact which every one can ratify for himself. . . . The second method of procedure for comparing the relative worth of pleasant and unpleasant feelings is to present them as the united and inseparable consequences of one and the same act. In this case one also finds that in a total result opposite feelings of equal vividness hold the scales in balance, and thus bring about a state of inactivity. . . . We may, with perfect certainty, declare that the opposed feelings present themselves to the imagination as separated by an equal space, in that their effect on volition and action (whether attractive or repulsive) stands in the same relation to their respective vividness as mental actions or feelings, and that

if they are of equal intensity, the active result will be equal to zero. Here, also, I can only request the reader to make the observation himself."

There is no doubt that many men are unhappy. The single fact of suicide—about six thousand cases every year in Prussia—would prove this ; for with a great part of the suicides suffering surely out-weighs joy. But it also is scarcely doubted by anyone, that there are happy men ; happiness is a fact as well as unhappiness. We here understand happiness, of course, in a modest sense—not as a life full of unbroken delight, but simply in a high degree desirable, where joy outweighs suffering. Excessive demands on life and men are themselves causes of pessimism ; and we must agree with Schopenhauer : "The surest way not to be very unhappy is not to demand great happiness. This was what Goethe's young friend Merck perceived when he wrote : 'Excessive pretensions to happiness, to the degree to which we may imagine it, spoil everything in this world. He who can free himself from them, and not yearn for what is not possible for him, can always pull through.' Here the advice is given to diminish one's claims on enjoyment, property, social position, and the like to a modest amount, because it is just this striving and running after happiness, splendour and enjoyment which draws upon us the greatest misfortunes. But it is wise and advisable for this reason also, that it is very easy to be unhappy ; on the other hand, not difficult, but quite impossible to be very happy." John Stuart Mill says that the happiness which those have in mind who regard universal happiness as the moral standard is "not a life of rapture, but moments of such, in an existence made up of few and transitory pains, many and various pleasures, with the decided predominance of the active over the passive, and having as the foundation of the whole, not to expect more from life than it is capable of bestowing. A life thus composed, to those who have been fortunate enough to obtain it, has always appeared worthy of the name of happiness. And such an exist-



ence is even now the lot of many, during some considerable portion of their lives. The present wretched education, and wretched social arrangements, are the only real hindrance to its being attainable by almost all."

Are more men happy than unhappy? In the life of the majority does joy predominate? We do not doubt it; and those who have represented the opposite view, have failed in their attempt to prove it, or to make it even probable. And it also seems to us beyond doubt, that the progress of human development leads to an increase of happiness. On the supposition that joy exceeds suffering in the life of most men, the advancement of culture would be desirable because it would make life possible to more men: the sum of happiness on earth would be increased even if simply the number of men increased. But progress leads also to a heightening of the happiness of the individual. This seems to follow from the fact proved by Herbert Spencer that "everywhere faculties adjust themselves to the conditions of existence in such wise that the activities those conditions require become pleasurable." The natural sciences—which are still so young—will make further progress; especially medicine will attain more and more the rank of a science, as the knowledge of nature, which underlies it, becomes more nearly perfect. In the future, health and life will be better protected than they have yet been. The causes of that disease, which we may call the pessimistic temperament, will perhaps be discovered and means of cure found, or, at least, we may be able to prevent the spread of this evil. The sciences of the mind and of social life—which are still in their infancy—will grow stronger. They will lead to a better method of education, a better system of laws. Men will learn more and more to regard happiness as a duty, as a free creation of the mind itself. They will more and more accustom themselves to a wholesome regulation of their view of life. "The rules for making our thoughts subservient to our happiness," says Bentham, "are two, (1) to exclude such thoughts as are painful, and (2) to introduce such as are pleasurable."

It goes without saying that the precept, to turn the attention

away from what is painful, and toward what is pleasant, and therefore as the ancient Democritus of Abdera demanded, to enjoy oneself as much as possible, and to be troubled as little as possible, holds good only under the limitation; "So far as the highest moral commandment makes no claim against it." Therefore (to change somewhat the formula of Krönig), "Trouble thyself only so far as it is useful," and "enjoy thyself as much as is not harmful." Sir John Lubbock says in his little book, "On the Pleasures of Life": "I cannot but think that the world would be better and brighter if our teachers would dwell on the duty of happiness as well as on the happiness of duty; for we ought to be as cheerful as we can, if only because to be happy ourselves is a most effectual contribution to the happiness of others."

The sympathy of man will rise higher than ever before. It will be more and more a consolation to a man, who himself cannot be happy, to know that the world goes better with others; his participation in the life of the community will lift him above his own misery. He will, in spite of it, entertain a friendly feeling toward the universe, for he will see that the universal laws of nature create a predominance of good. And with the development of head and heart toward perfection, the social arrangement will improve. Nations will draw nearer to one another, and finally unite in the "world's state," a confederation for reciprocal help.

Against our hopes for the future some will affirm that civilization does not make men happier—that we are not better off than our early ancestors, and that therefore our remote posterity in all probability will not be any happier than we. But what we know of the more backward races of men does not seem to support this view. Their life is in great part an existence full of uncertainty, full of superstitious fear, exposed, without protection, to the powers of nature. What we regard as the special evils of civilization are often only ancient evils in another form. Perhaps suicide is now far commoner than formerly. But this fact does not prove that there are now more unhappy men. Men have become more self-conscious, more capable of self-determination, religious doubts

which restrained them from that extreme step have lost their force. And our times full of happiness, certainly full of interest, but also full of unrest, and of internal revolutions, are only a period of transition such as no former time has been. Much that once checked men is dying out, and in trying to protect what remains, we may only prevent the rapid development of new things that are beneficial. When the old is quite extinct, and the new has become strong, more peace and repose will reign. Lastly, our opponent may fall back upon the fact that a child is happier than a grown-up person, and demand that we infer that mankind also in its childhood was happiest. But the childhood of mankind is only a metaphor of speech, and metaphor proves nothing. Grown-up savages are not children whom parents guard against the cares of life. We may compare the children of savages with our own and ask which are happier, but not set up a parallel of grown-up savages with our children. And the statement that a child is happier than a grown-up man is not in this universal way by any means true. In their later life, many men are happier than they were in childhood, and many a judicious critic of human life has been of the opinion that under healthful circumstances the happiness of mature life is regularly deeper and fuller than that of childhood. "I cannot conceive," says Alban Stolz, "why one so often reads and hears the sigh that childhood is the happiest time of life. To me childhood presents itself as troubled and anxious, and its best moments as over against many of manhood's moods are miserable, petty, joys painted in water-colours. In my youth I continually had the wish to be able to return to nothingness."

From our knowledge of the nature of things, we may infer that the future of mankind will be incomparably more contented than its past, and we must almost say therefore that man is just beginning to live. If we now regard it as sure that progress in the development of the human race will bring about an increase of happiness, there opens before our mental vision views which well may fill us with gladness.

After all these considerations we need not fear pessimism with its doctrine that all life is essentially suffering, and that non-existence is preferable to existence. Pessimism would not only have to prove—which it has not proved—that suffering exceeds joy in the world, but it would have to show that this relation holds unchangeable for all future time; for, even if heretofore, life has contained more pain than joy, still life on earth would have to be regarded as something desirable if the surplus happiness of the future is to outweigh the surplus suffering of the past. At any rate pessimism must show that hitherto there has been in no man's life more happiness than unhappiness; for although only one life may have had a surplus of happiness, the condemnation of life in general would be groundless; for what has happened once lies within the range of human nature, and under changed conditions may happen oftener. But pessimism has not succeeded in showing that even one man has had more misery than happiness.

It is no small effrontery, without regard to the express affirmation of judicious men that their life holds a surplus of happiness, to declare that every life is essentially suffering. Is the pessimist the only one who has a right to a judgment concerning existence? Has he a nearer acquaintance with his neighbour's life than the neighbour himself? And perhaps no pessimist has ever yet held his doctrine to be absolutely certain; for we learn the degree of a man's faith by his willingness to act in accordance with it; still, no one has ever heard of any pessimist applying the most important practical consequences of his doctrine. Some pessimists have killed themselves; but this only proved their conviction, which perhaps was justified, that their own existence contained an excess of pain. Some pessimists, whose physical illness had become insufferable, have killed their children and then themselves; but this only points to a conviction that they regarded existence for themselves, and also for their children living with them in the same condition, as an evil. But so far as is known, no pessimist has become a murderer of masses of men, or an advocate of such murder. And still only such an act would be proof of an absolute conviction as

to the truth of the doctrine that existence is an evil. If all existence were such, and if, as is the case with the pessimists, the validity of the commandment : " deliver thy neighbour from evil " were recognised by all, the consequence would be that we should be constrained to murder as many of our fellow-men as possible, with as little pain as possible, even if they should be foolish enough not to wish it. But pessimists with indignation scorn such a carrying out of their theory ; they repent themselves of it. Most remarkable attempts have they made to escape from that logical issue. Schopenhauer tells us : " We do not really kill a being when we kill it, its suffering is not diminished, because it is in reality one and the same with all other sufferers : "—Schopenhauer's private metaphysics, from which among other things it would follow, that between the good man and bad man no real difference exists, because in the inmost reality they are both one. Another pessimist tells us : " For the individual creature which regards its happiness as its single aim in life, it would be wise to abandon life ; but to extend this consequence to others is not permissible. Even if some were willing, all would not conjoin, and as only the more intelligent would agree, the stupid would be the only ones to survive, and the process would be one of natural selection in favour of stupidity. Yes, even if all men without exception, should agree to commit a collective murder of mankind, still, the place which men occupy on earth, having become empty, would again be filled through the same forces which already had once brought men forth, and nothing would be gained." But in reality it does not at all depend upon the willingness of another ; the person who objected would have to be killed also, and if the more intelligent see that the stupid will not do what is best, they would be morally bound to exterminate these first. It is true that even if a pessimist murders a hundred men, fourteen hundred million remain over ; but for that he is not responsible ; if others followed his example, if every one did that,—which according to pessimism he ought to,—soon no one would survive. The collective suicide of mankind would, at any rate for many thousand years, perhaps for ever—no one can prove

the contrary--exterminate the highest, the human forms of suffering on this earth ; and if there were an immeasurable diminution of suffering for thousands of years surely it seems very much would be gained.

Schopenhauer says : " There is only one innate error, and that is, that we are here to be happy," of which our whole life, according to this dictum, disabuses us, as life, by its very constitution, bears the character of suffering.

" In this sense it would be therefore more correct to place the end of life in our woe, than to place it in our weal. For . . . the more a man suffers, the sooner the true end of life is attained ; and the more happily a man lives, the longer that end is postponed." According to this, the exact opposite of what men have regarded as moral seems to be moral, and the witches' words seem true : " Fair is foul and foul is fair ! " Virtue is vice, for it assuages the suffering of others and makes them happier, and interferes with their attainment of life's true aim ; while this aim is furthered by the vices which cause misery and destroy happiness, and therefore vices are in reality virtues. If Schopenhauer, therefore, does not set up as a moral imperative : " Help nobody, but injure all as much as you can ! " but exactly the opposite: " Injure nobody, but help all as much as you can ! " this only shows that his intuitive moral consciousness was stronger than his craving for logical consistency, or his belief in his own doctrine. Only so much is certain, and at bottom the pessimist also must think, that pain is pain, and happiness happiness, and that one can relieve the pain of others and heighten their pleasure ; uncertain is the belief that such conduct has an overweight of evil consequences, uncertain the belief that life is not worth living. And the judgments of our actual moral consciousness involve the presupposition that life is worth living, since they approve conduct which furthers, and disapprove conduct which destroys life. Pessimism was a reaction from the optimism of the eighteenth century, with its doctrine that whatever is, is right. This optimism, if it is not simply a meaningless phrase, is really, as Schopenhauer says, a ruthless thought, a bitter scorn of the nameless suffering of mankind.

Schopenhauer is perfectly justified in declaring that such optimism is inconsistent with morality: "If the world is a theophany then everything which man, yes, and the animals do is quite divine and excellent; nothing is to be blamed, nothing to be praised in preference to anything else, therefore no ethics."

This optimism was often only a product of a lower way of thinking, a lack of all ideals of affection and sense of justice. The optimist, in many cases, found himself in a very agreeable situation, and in order not to be disturbed in any way he closed his eyes against all misery, all oppression among his fellowmen; he smothered his fellow-feeling, he beautified the wicked and evil, in order that he might not be reminded of his duty to depart from a life of enjoyment, and come to the rescue of his brothers.

But as optimism (in that sense of the word) cannot be brought into harmony with morality, likewise pessimism—quite irrespectively of its final issue—has a pernicious influence upon the moral life. The conviction that the non-existence of the world is preferable to its existence, must discourage all active spirit, and lame our moral endeavour, along with all other vital activities; for all is vanity. And if a pessimist like Schopenhauer affirms not only that all life is painful, but also that it is sinful, that human nature is bad, this predisposes one to hatred of mankind, and just like optimism, tends to beautify badness itself. To represent men as monkeys and tigers, has the effect, as Hume well said, to extinguish remorse; responsibility vanishes when a man "considers that vice is as natural to mankind as the particular instincts to brute creatures." And in still another respect pessimism coincides with optimism; as the latter regards the world as perfect, and therefore not in need of improvement, so the former regards it as irremediably bad and therefore incapable of improvement. The result is the same; they both leave the worst evils unattacked—the evils in social relations—exactly those, therefore, which might be removed if men only wished it, and to remove which is the holy task of mankind. To those to whom the existing evil conditions are advantageous, pessimism is very agreeable, for it teaches that by

changing these or those institutions, evil would not be diminished, but could only be transformed in its shape, therefore that it would be best to leave things as they are, and to submit to them patiently.

Entirely different from this pessimism, as from that optimism, is that which Dühring in his admirable book on "The Worth of Life," calls the pessimism of indignation, the condemnation of the bad of every kind, the struggle against it, springing out of a comparison of our conditions with the ideal of righteousness, the aiming at a reformation, and a loving and trusting conception of the universal human nature, and of the world, as of a being in which the good far outweighs the bad, and in which it is a part of goodness to hate and to root out evil. We have reason to make friends with the great whole of things, a part of which we are, because we are convinced that the universal facts, not to be set aside by man's labour, are good, or at least endurable; and that it is our high privilege, through our energy, to annihilate the worst evils and to bring the world nearer to the perfect. We do not live in a heaven, it is true, and pain, moral and physical, is not less real than joy; but neither do we live in a hell, and the joy is not less real than the pain; and everyone of us can, and ought, contribute his little toward bringing our existence nearer to the ideal of a kingdom of heaven on earth. Therefore there is nothing better than that each man should rejoice in his own work toward this end, for that is his portion.

Let us now gather together the results of our considerations. What ought I to do? To answer this question is our task. Conscience bids us do right. But what is right? Our immediate consciousness often does not say; different duties appear to conflict. And often others judge differently from ourselves. How can we make sure that their view and not ours is erroneous, how convince them? We may not appeal merely to our feelings. We require, therefore, a criterion; only one, however, final and supreme. We can find such a one only by examining those of our moral judgments which are certain, with the object of discovering



whether they point to some uniform principle. We discover that all dispositions of the human will which we approve are advantageous to the general welfare, and that all which we disapprove are disadvantageous, and that likewise the rules of duty command such conduct as furthers the general weal, and forbid such as hinders it. Our conscience does not approve of this or that special thing directly, but it has a definite object: the universal welfare. This proves to be a common principle of our moral decisions, and for that reason it is a supreme ethical criterion. Through this discovery we can bring our separate moral ideas into a unified whole, and in special points may rectify them.

As to the fundamental questions of ethics there prevails among citizens of the various civilized nations a very great unanimity of opinion: they regard morals as well as science as an international affair. Among lower races, only the individual tribe is taken into account; but the more highly societies are developed, the wider the circles of men which are considered. The welfare of mankind is the moral law, to the recognition of which societies approach in proportion as they advance morally.

If we turn from merely human actions and attributes to which we ascribe worth, to the totality of things which we regard as good, we find that they all include a relation to the weal and woe of men; to be good is to be a cause of joy, and a good thing increases in worth in proportion as it produces more welfare; therefore, what brings happiness for the whole of mankind is the best. The human qualities which are of most worth for mankind are excellencies of human character, we therefore are quite right in regarding this as in the highest sense good. This consideration, also, leads us to the recognition of universal welfare as the fundamental principle.

The greatest possible genuine happiness of all becomes the supreme criterion. Deeds are right or wrong if they further or hinder this aim. In calculating the consequences of acts, those are to be given the first place which affect the life, the health, the intellect, and the moral disposition of men—in short, their physical and mental perfection, since these influence in the

highest degree the general welfare. As the final results of the practical experience of mankind have found expression in the recognised moral rules of civilized societies by the carrying out of which the prosperity of society is secured, the way to achieve this end is, in general, to live according to these moral rules. But if cases come forward which these do not seem to decide for us, we shall have to settle directly the consequences of the action upon universal welfare. We must so act that if every one in the same situation acted in like manner, the interest of the community would be furthered. And because deliberation, owing to the shortness of time and the force of passion, might easily prove to be very imperfect if we waited until the moment of action, we ought often in our quiet hours to consider our situation, and build up principles of conduct for definite classes of cases, and impress these upon our mind, that when we come to action we may remember and follow them. Repeated deliberation, together with every enriching experience, will place us in a position to shape the moral rules, which we build, into a form ever more and more perfect.

The objections which have been brought against our highest criterion do not overthrow it. For the most part they rest upon the erroneous presupposition that a man must separately calculate the consequences of each act; or, the assumption is that the happiness principle is shown to be untenable through the false application which may be made of it, as when anyone might be induced by it to make too many exceptions to the general rules of morality, or might come to the opinion that the end justifies the means, or that a man might be treated simply as a tool, or when anyone misunderstands the principle that the happiness of all is to be taken into account and that every one should count for one, and nobody for more than one. Without doubt the desire to further the general welfare has often led to deeds pernicious to the community; but incomparably more often, and to a higher degree, has the failure to consult the general welfare proved pernicious. Finally the opinion has arisen out of the theory of evolution that not happiness, but the preservation of the life of mankind is the

standard of morals. But this opinion starts from an erroneous assumption that nature imparts moral commandments ; it forgets that mere existence is not a good, and that the most prolonged existence possible for the greatest possible number, which is according to some disciples of evolution the highest good, was actualised in the medieval conception of hell.

Some men have thought that our earth itself is hell. That all life is essentially suffering, that increase of life is therefore increase of suffering ; and they have fallen back for proof upon certain pessimistic utterances of renowned men. But over against this we can set the utterances of other equally distinguished men, which express a very decided belief in the worth of life ; and the great majority of mankind are of this belief. An unhappy temperament appears for the most part to be the cause of a gloomy view of life ; pessimism has never been able to approach anything like a scientific proof of its teachings. It had not simply to prove (what it has never succeeded in doing) that unhappiness predominates in the world ; but rather it must have shown that there has never been in any human life more joy than suffering ; for if one life has had a surplus of happiness, if human nature, in general, therefore, be capable of happiness, then under changed circumstances, perhaps many, perhaps almost all, could become happy. As a fact many have—with a modest interpretation of the word—accounted themselves so ; and we have no reason to ascribe to pessimists a better judgment as to the state of their consciousness than to these others. Besides, no pessimist has ever drawn the practical conclusion of his doctrine that the murder of masses of men is to be recommended and practised ; and this proves that his belief in the doctrine does not exclude all doubt.

Just as pessimism, which denies the worth of life, is an untenable view, so is optimism which declares that everything that is, is right. Optimism in this sense of the word is incompatible with morality ; for in regarding everything as very good, it sets aside the difference between good and evil. In the same way pessimism is fatal to all morality through its hostility to life ; it must logically declare the good to be the opposite of what we hold to be moral.

It kills all spirit and all enthusiasm for the ideals of humanity,—for according to it all life is irremediably bad. Neither optimism nor pessimism is tenable but only the view of life which George Elliott calls meliorism : belief in the worth of life, and in our ability to heighten it. It is not a contemplative consideration of the world in general, which will give us quiet and satisfaction in the midst of the evils of existence, but our own struggle against the evil and for the good of humanity. Therefore Goethe wrote in the youthful Schopenhauer's album :

“ In thine own worth wouldst thou be glad,  
Then something to the world's worth add ! ”

## CHAPTER III.

### THE RIGHT AIM OF LIFE.

#### (1.) *Examination of Egoism: General law of the Will.*

WE have found out what the standard of morality is, and how we can settle what actions in given cases are right. But the knowledge of right does not guarantee the doing of it. Now what is the surest means of accustoming ourselves to do it? Should we not in order to lead a well ordered life let our life be guided by one aim, so that one motive shall be supreme over others? What ought that motive to be?

We sometimes receive answer that at the basis of all our actions lies one motive—self interest, and that therefore moral appeal can be made ultimately to this motive only; men, it is said, do always what seems to them for their own good—in fact it is not in the range of possibility for them to choose anything else—and if morals would move them to any given line of conduct it must show them that that line is for their own best interest. This notion rests upon an imperfect psychological observation, upon a confusion of two very different phenomena. In every act of the will we must distinguish an intellectual side and an emotional side. Mere cognitions, mere ideas without being combined with feelings of pleasure or pain of any kind or degree do not move the will; no volition or action is possible where there is a state of perfect indifference. Movements indeed can be brought forth by purely physiological processes, without the joint action of feelings, but if any volition or desire is to arise, some sort of agreeable, pleasurable, satisfactory, or, on the other hand, disagreeable, painful, or unsatisfactory feelings must be aroused. It appears to be a general law of the will, that is, a fact accompanying all phenomena of the

will, that the idea which is bound up with the greatest relative agreeableness, or the least relative disagreeableness, determines the act of the will. Man often chooses an act which brings pain, but then in his consciousness the idea of acting otherwise is bound up with a feeling of displeasure which is still stronger than that accompanying the act which he chooses, and the will is determined by the idea which contains the least unpleasantness. Many a savage has submitted to tortures of all kinds without being induced to do an act to which others wished to coerce him ; but the fact is, that the idea of showing himself to be a coward, of exposing himself to shame, is connected in his consciousness with a still stronger feeling of unpleasantness than the idea of submitting to torture. Pain and joy determine the will, and this pain and joy are always felt by the being which wills, in as much as it cannot feel with the feeling of others, or will with the will of others, any more than it can move with the limbs of others. An idea of the weal and woe of others a person may have, but mere ideas do not incite to action ; only when they, through sympathy, call forth in an individual himself feelings of weal and woe, are volition and action possible ; only when it is agreeable to please another, when it is unpleasant not to help another, will a person please or help.

Wherein then does love consist ? Does it not consist in feeling pleasure at the thought of another and of his happiness, and pain at the thought of his unhappiness, and therefore pleasure in gladly furthering his happiness ? Or do we love when we are indifferent to the thought of another and his happiness, or when the thought of his misery gives us pleasure ? Is it not in truth one and the same fact, which we express at one time in a single word and describe at another with several words, when we at one time say that a man loves another, and a second time say that he finds delight in companionship with him, in the thought of him, and in making him happy ? Love and this delight are not two things, but one and the same. Many say that pleasure and pain do not determine a man's action in his benevolence, but are effects of it, phenomena following after the successful or unsuccess-

ful effort. But one has no right to speak of causes and effects where there is only one emotional phenomenon. Love is not the cause of feeling pleasure at the idea of another, of his happiness, and at the thought of furthering the latter, but is the name for that feeling. To be sure, a man who seeks to bring pleasure to the one he loves does not as a rule think of the joy which he brings to himself, if he succeeds in pleasing his friend; not to make himself but his friend happy is his aim. But this idea of making the friend happy is pleasant, while the idea of not doing so is in his consciousness joined to a feeling of pain; and the feelings which are at hand determine the will. Where the thought of doing for another is at hand but the feeling not touched, where a man's heart is left cold and indifferent, no action follows; and therein is the one who does not love different from the one who does.

A moral act proper is no exception to the general law of the will. It often happens that a man follows the voice of duty although he knows that he thereby draws upon himself great suffering, but then the thought of acting contrary to duty is to him still more painful than the thought of drawing upon himself that suffering. The fulfilment of duty in such cases is not pleasant, not a matter of inclination, but is painful; the man in this situation has choice only between different painful actions, and he chooses that which in the moment of action is least painful. The Swiss hero, Arnold von Winkelried, as the legend goes, decided "victory to the Swiss at Sempach in the year 1386 by his self-sacrifice. Crying out: 'Comrades, I will make a path for you, care for my wife and children!' he embraced with his strong arms several opposing lances of the Austrian knights, threw himself upon them, and, in falling, made a break in the battle line of the enemy, into which his comrades forced their way. A magnificent monument in Stans proclaims the glory of this deed." Surely there have been men who were capable of such a deed; but it does not constitute an exception to the general law of the will, and it is not easy to see that the heroism of the deed would be heightened if it were an exception, or that men could have an interest in pre-supposing

such exceptions. It could be of no advantage to mankind that men should be able to act without feelings; but that they have strong feelings for duty, for what is right and noble is good. Arnold von Winkelried certainly did not act without feeling; but in the moment that he achieved his glorious deed, the idea of saving his fatherland by sacrificing himself was blessed, was more inspiring than the thought of preserving his own life; and the idea of his own death, of death for his fatherland, was less painful than the idea of leaving that great deed undone. Had this not been the case, had the thought of making the path for freedom not been more satisfying to him than the thought of continuing his own life, had the thought of his own death been more terrible than the alternative, Winkelried would not have done that deed—he would have been a different man from what he really was.

What distinguishes a moral from an immoral man is this, that in the former the ideas of duty, right, and goodness, excite strong feelings of pleasure and the wish to act in harmony with them, and of displeasure at the thought of acting contrary to them, feelings, the energy of which may exceed that of all others; while in the immoral man these ideas awaken no, or only such weak, feelings that their influence is not adequate to counteract the influence of others. Both act from feelings, only not from the same ones.

By proving that the volition of the moral as well as of the immoral man is determined by feeling, do we show that the one is in any way near to or identical with the other? By no means! If that were so, then proving that the moral as well as the immoral man wills with his own will, exercises with his own body, that both have arms, hands, senses, feelings, and understanding, in short, proving that both are men, would be showing that the two were alike.

In all phenomena of the will, we must distinguish between the elements of knowledge and intellect, and the elements of feeling or emotion. Only the circumstance that thinkers confused these two elements led to the fancy that if action proceeds from the



pleasure and pain of the one who acts, then all action must be self-interested, and disinterested action must be a mere fable.

Is my thinking selfish because I must think with my own understanding? Is my action selfish because I must act with my own body? And is my volition selfish because it is I myself who wills when I will, and because I cannot be moved to volition except through my own feelings? Such an application of the word selfish would not only be a deviation from the general use of language, but also entirely senseless. Evidently, then, an act can only be called selfish or self-interested when that which the person wills to do—when the intellectual side of the volition—is the idea of his own comfort, benefit, or happiness: when the ego is not only the source of the person's volition, but also is its object. And always when that which the person wills to do, when the object, the intellectual side of the volition, that which he has in mind at the time of willing, is something else than his own interest, his action is disinterested.

Now, there can be no doubt, if the distinction we have made be kept in mind, that in the true and only meaning of the word disinterested which has any sense, actions are in countless cases disinterested. In innumerable cases actions are done without taking into account the consequent happiness that will come to one's self. The thought of one's own interest cannot, in numberless deeds, be detected in one's consciousness, and it cannot be said that a man wills a thing in the moment when that thing is not in his mind. Is a man who snatches back a child that is approaching an open well, thinking of himself? The old Chinese philosopher, Mencius, said: "The moment men see a child approaching an open well, they all have an alarmed and sympathetic heart. This happens not from a desire to commend themselves to the parents of the child, or to gain praise from neighbours and friends."

It is quite generally believed that men after their death have no knowledge of what happens to those who survive, still a good man at the approach of death does not lose interest in his family, his

friends, and his fatherland. This is a phenomenon which of itself is sufficient to overthrow the theory that all acts of the will are purely selfish, and, indeed, in general it belongs to the essence of genuine love to wish directly the well-being of the person loved without a reference to one's own fortune, and he who denies such a capacity in man denies the existence of real love. True benevolence excludes regard to one's own self-interest, he who is of service to others only for his own advantage is not benevolent. If benevolence exists at all, the well-being of another must be directly wished, the idea of contributing to it must be pleasant to us, while the idea of not doing so must be painful, and must in this way move the will. And this excitation of our feelings and volition cannot take place through the idea that our own interest is thereby advanced.

Men often act knowingly against their own interest. For example, a drinker may very likely observe that he is ruining his health and destroying his good name, and will soon have exhausted his fortune—he may see perfectly well that his course is leading to his destruction; and yet when the desire for drink again becomes powerful in him, he will not withstand it. Knowingly he pursues that course although he has all those evils very clearly in his mind, and knows that the preservation of these good things are incomparably more valuable in his life than the satisfaction of his passion. He sees and recognises the greater good and acts against it knowingly; because a closer, although smaller good has more power over his feelings than the greater good which is at a distance. The greatest happiness although foreseen, does not constrain the will because it does not exist in the present, and therefore cannot in the present take effect and move the will. What exists now is the idea or knowledge of the greatest happiness; but mere ideas or cognitions do not move the will. The idea of future happiness is not happiness which, as such, is able to overthrow the influence of present feelings of pain or pleasure; thus only the present feelings determine the will. Only when the idea of future happiness arouses present feelings, and indeed stronger feelings than others that are at hand working in another direction,

can volition and action issue on the side of that idea. In fact, the recognition of one's own best good awakens in every one, according to the law that states of mind tend to reproduce themselves, a desire for one's own good. But this desire, this so-called rational self-love is with many persons only a weak impulse ; with them the idea of their own advantage awakens only weak feelings, and these are easily overcome by other desires. Therefore, in a sacrifice of one's own happiness there is nothing wonderful ; it is a simple result of the circumstances that the desire for one's own greatest possible well-being is only one motive, and that amidst other motives—for example, revenge, or love of knowledge, or love of mankind, or the feeling of duty, it can fall into conflict and be overcome in the struggle ; the idea of satisfying one's vengeance or of discovering the truth, or of working for the happiness of others, or of fulfilling one's duty may awaken stronger feelings than the idea of advancing one's own happiness. Rational self-love, reference to our total welfare for seventy or eighty years, is a slowly growing product of our emotional and rational nature, and reaches great energy only through duration and self-discipline. It is not morally desirable that self-love should be weak, but on the contrary, strong, provided conscience and universal benevolence be still stronger.

Many persons who recognise sympathy and benevolence as actual, have yet regarded them not as primary, but only as phenomena which have been developed out of the egoism which at first held sway. It does not appear that the settlement of this question is of any decisive moral significance, however important it may be from a psychological and pedagogical point of view. The most distinguished psychologists of the present time look upon it as erroneous, and, in fact, it is not easy to see how it can be justified. If we give a distinct meaning at all to the word egoism, it must signify the conscious preference of our own welfare to that of others ; egoism presupposes a certain development, therefore, of the understanding—the idea of one's self as distinct from others, and from the feelings of others. Little children accordingly cannot be egoistic, for as yet they have no conception of self.

But at the same time with the development of self-consciousness, the conception of other beings also arises, and has feelings associated with it just as the idea of self has ; self-regard and sympathy grow at the same time. Love and self-sacrifice, on the other hand, show themselves even among the lower animals. Maternal love is not peculiar to human beings.

It is also well to remember that in proving an act to be disinterested, nothing is yet proved as to its moral worth. For disinterested is a purely negative term, and only expresses that the motive is not personal interest ; what the motive is, it does not say. Persons are often disposed to understand by disinterested actions only such as proceed from benevolence, or a sense of duty, or a desire for knowledge, or some other motive which is apt to rule in a highly respected man ; but then they put into the word something to which it properly has no right. The worst action—a deed of pure cruelty, revenge, hatred or envy may be disinterested, may have as its aim the misfortune of another, without any reference to one's own gain. In describing any given line of conduct it would be better to say positively what the motive is, than simply to designate it in that negative way.

In the quarrel over the disinterestedness of actions, much is merely a strife of words. In a certain sense every action is interested ; for if we ought to do anything, the doing of it must in some way concern us, we must have an interest in it ; but the whole matter is nothing but a quarrel about words ; on the other hand, the question whether anything but one's own personal welfare can be an object of volition, is one of the most important questions in ethics.

## *(2.) Analysis of Egoism : Duty and Self-Interest.*

A man must not let himself be guided by his self-interest in all his conduct ; but without doubt he is capable of pursuing his own greatest happiness as the final aim of action. The question is : ought he to do so ? Is it the right aim ?

I could not fall back upon my reason to vindicate me, if I wished

to make my own happiness the controlling object of my life. For my reason shows me that since a thing is good in so far as it creates happiness, that thing which creates it for many or for the whole society is better than that which accomplishes the same only for one person ; and my reason cannot take back this judgment when I myself happen to be the one in point. The happiness of mankind would therefore be more in accordance with reason, as the object to strive for, than one's own happiness—unless to strive after one's own happiness should advance the universal welfare more than a direct striving after this latter itself. If I am an egoist I should not be constrained by this rational knowledge to a corresponding line of conduct, for mere knowledge does not move the will. I should therefore, as a matter of fact, prefer my own to universal happiness ; but I should be compelled to admit that I could not bring forward any rational argument for my preference.

And conscience stands equally in contradiction to the choice of one's own greatest happiness as the aim of life, whether I or another person be the chooser ; for it is possible to feel moral satisfaction for an act which appears detrimental to my private interest, and moral pain for one that furthers it ; I am satisfied with myself if I am conscious that no motive of self-interest underlay the act which served the public ; and if I think I discover that such an act on the part of another was done for the advantage to be derived to himself, I should not respect him because of the act, I should not infer from it that he was a good man. On the other hand, acts of self-denial for the sake of a great cause awaken my moral admiration. Justice and benevolence, qualities which make an individual conform to the public weal, not egoistic prudence, are the elements of character which I value most highly morally. I recognise that *it is my duty*, and *it is to my self-interest* are two very different propositions. I do not feel my own interest to be an obligation ; when any one shows me how it will be advanced by my conduct I do not feel on that account constrained to act so ; and on the other hand, when I see that a certain act is a duty I do not need to believe that it is a personal advantage to me ;

and this intuition I have not only concerning my own moral judgments, but also concerning those of others.

If I consult the ultimate standard of right it testifies that self-interest can only then be a moral aim of life, when the pursuit of it would advance the general welfare more than any other. The first thought would be that between the interests of the individual and the community a perfect harmony must exist. This opinion finds many defenders; let us examine it. We generally call by the name of *sanctions* the pain or pleasure attached to the transgression or fulfilment of civil or moral laws, so far as it can be foreseen and may thereby constrain the will. We may distinguish physical, political, social, sympathetic and moral sanctions. The physical sanction consists of those pains and pleasures which the regular external course of nature, without the intervention of man, brings upon the doer of a deed, in consequence of his conduct. Thus ill-health and an early death on the one side, and on the other health and a prolonged life, are physical sanctions to the rules of temperance. Political sanctions consist of the punishments and rewards of the state for a bad or a good act. By the social sanctions we understand the suffering or happiness which the favourable or unfavourable opinions entertained towards us by our fellow-men on account of our conduct bring us—the pain we suffer at the thought of being an object of scorn and aversion, as well as the many evils which befall us in consequence of an unfavourable reputation, such as being cut off from companionship, the refusal to do us favours, and indeed positive persecutions of many kinds; on the other hand, the pleasure we enjoy at the idea of being loved and cherished by our fellow-men as well as all the other good consequences of a good reputation. By the sympathetic sanction is understood my emotional participation in the feeling which my conduct will awaken in others. And the moral sanction consists of the feelings of inward dissatisfaction or satisfaction which accompany and follow our act so far as we regard it to be wrong or right. Do these sanctions bring about a perfect harmony of duty with self-interest?

There can be no doubt that conduct suggested by enlightened

self-interest to a very wide extent coincides with conduct which the interest of society demands ; but just as little doubt is there that in many cases the course of egoistic prudence and the path of duty diverge.

The physical sanction confers rich reward upon conduct in harmony with the laws of health, and without doubt it is a benefit to the public that in general everyone strives to preserve his own health. But how often cases arise where the interests of others, and society, compel us to disregard these laws ! And nature makes no exception in favour of conduct in harmony with duty—she punishes a transgression of the rules of health as relentlessly when it springs from the noblest motives as when from the meanest. The threats of political law on the whole make it a matter of self-interest to abstain from all gross transgressions against our fellow-men ; to commit a crime is in most cases as foolish as it is bad. For even if a man fancies (and criminals, as a rule, do entertain the hope) that his evil deed will not be detected, still he can never be absolutely certain, and the fear that sometime his deed will be discovered, can make his whole life uneasy. Still, cases arise in which the fears of being discovered are so extremely slight that in an egoistical calculation they may be left out of account in comparison with the great advantage which the deed would bring. But it also may happen that lawful conduct brings upon it persecution from the state. For example, in many states a military officer who declines to accept a challenge to a duel, although in conformity with the law, is notwithstanding punished by dismissal from office. Finally, in times of civil disorder the political sanction often rewards unjust conduct, and punishes just conduct ; and whoever has power enough will be able to disregard the laws without danger. And must we not also take into account that many deeds, which in their essence are really criminal, still slip through the meshes of the law ?

Now, does the social sanction make good the defects of the political ? In many cases it undoubtedly does. Violations of duty, against which the laws of the state cannot move, come

under judgment of public opinion, and especially of persons with whom the evil doers associate ; and the happiness of a man is in a thousand ways dependent upon the good opinion of those with whom he lives. The contempt and scorn of citizens, social disgrace, is often an evil harder to bear than legal punishment. The just man on the other hand enjoys the respect of his fellow-men, and experiences countless blessings on numerous occasions. To the benevolent man others are kindly disposed, and return good with good. But does the social sanction always reward the right, and always punish evil conduct ? This question no one will answer in the affirmative. The social sanction consists of the good and evil consequences which the favourable or unfavourable opinions of others produce. The nearer others are to a man, the closer he is bound to them, the more essentially is his happiness influenced by them. Now, when a man, in pursuance of duty, prefers the interest of the community to that of some smaller circle in which he lives, he often finds how very difficult the social sanction may make it to do right. If an office-holder fulfils his political duty although those who are above him in office belong to the opposite party, or if a man of science does not suppress important but unpopular truths, he must often suffer himself, and cause his family to suffer with him ; and it may happen that they and his friends will declare his conduct to be unnatural and unjust, and will withdraw their affection from him ; the approval of those more remote is not an equivalent for the destruction of family happiness. He who will not violate the duty of absolute truthfulness, although some one to whom he is personally under obligations will thereby suffer, the conduct of such a man will be called ungrateful by many ; and very many will condemn him as faithless and a traitor, and will hate him, if he opposes friends as soon as he perceives their conduct to be hurtful to the community, or if he does not spare the unrighteous methods of his own party, or does not oppose what is just in his opponents. And not always is it simply a small circle who are estranged by his right conduct ; almost the whole community may be against him if he, filled with a true sense of the public



interest, renders a great but unrecognised service to his country or to mankind. In fact, very often it is exactly the highest virtue which receives no recognition, and the best in the world is without thanks ; often the greatest benefactors of mankind have been crucified and burned. The more a community deviates from the ideal of society, the less will the social sanction uphold right conduct. He who will be controlled in his action by the advantages which the social sanction will bring him will not ask first : what is right, what is good for the community ? but : what will please those who are my intimate associates and upon whom I am dependent, what will the rich and the powerful call good ? he will anxiously avoid anything unpopular ; he will busy himself to bring about the appearance of serving his fellow-men, but really to serve them will not trouble him much.

External sanctions do not secure a harmony of duty and individual happiness. Do the inner, the sympathetic, and the moral sanctions, secure this ?

Surely a man is foolish who, in order to win a maximum of his own happiness, tries to accustom himself to take an interest only in his own personal welfare, and to suppress any participation in the sufferings and joys of his fellow-men. For the love of other beings, more than anything else, deepens, enriches, and heightens the bliss of life. The short-sighted egoist fears that genuine benevolence, sympathy with the pleasures and pains of others, and the effort to increase or diminish these may lead to a sacrifice of his own happiness ; in general, as much good as a man does to others, so much in the egoist's opinion does he deny himself. But a man may very often do good to others without losing anything, and when he does incur any damage it often is outweighed by a rich gain ; for to make others happy makes the benefactor happy. Benevolence does not in its very nature lead to a sacrifice of one's own happiness, but only under special circumstances. But in this respect it is not different from other impulses, with the exception of self-love ; they all, hunger, thirst, revenge, ambition, love of knowledge, and the like, often damage one's own happiness, and no one of them tends so greatly to the heightening of one's

happiness as love and benevolence. The wise egoist will therefore cultivate these feelings and not try to root them out. But does the sympathetic sanction, the joy and pain called forth in a man by bringing joy and pain to others, always make the right action selfishly prudent? By no means! Sometimes duty requires us to risk our own life in order to protect that of others; but self-prudence would only then permit this conduct when the continuance of our own life, after the injury to those we love, would be a continuance of over-balancing pain, and very often this would not be the case; and what is more, the sympathetic sanction is often on the side of what is opposed to duty. With most men the greatest intensity of their love is centred upon a few persons, wife, child, sister, friend; to make these happy, delights them most; to do these injury, pains them most. But duty may demand that the man consult the happiness of those loved ones as little as his own; and that he follow his conviction and serve the interest of humanity, although he and his loved ones will thereby suffer injury. Certainly the sympathetic anticipation of the general good results of our conduct may bring us a feeling of joy; but how often this will retreat quite into the background and only the pain obtrude itself upon us of seeing those dearest to us suffer! He who would be guided by the sympathetic sanction, would devote himself in fact to a small circle of men, but his path would often deviate widely from the line of universal benefaction and from duty. There is only one sanction that is always on the side of right action, the inner moral sanction, the peace and the joy which accompany the consciousness of doing right. Every one should be brought up to be satisfied with this. But does it therefore follow that right action always accords with the greatest possible happiness of the doer?

Without doubt the moral sanction is a mighty power. Through it virtue is its own reward, vice its own punishment. It has held men upright under the greatest calamities of fortune, and under the most cruel persecutions, and has filled them with courage and gladness. "Blessed are the pure in heart;" for in themselves they see goodness. What torture, what hell on earth remorse

produces, although it betrays itself by no outward sign! "For what is a man profited if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul?"

But let us consider what demands duty may make upon a man. It may require him to renounce all the highest worldly blessings which men covet: love, honour, wealth, comfort, health, yes, life itself, everything except a good conscience. Now can we say that, considered from the point of selfish prudence, this one good which he may retain, always outweighs all the rest? Is torture of conscience so great that it would make a life, preserved by violating duty, possess an excess of pain over pleasure? Is the sum of suffering, which the loss for conscience sake of love, honour, wealth, health, is sure to bring, less than the sum of moral pain which a transgression of duty would inflict? We do not ask how the matter would stand with an ideally perfect man. We ask what is true of men as they actually are. It may well be true of a few persons that moral pain would outweigh all other kinds. But are there many such? No one could say that there are. Men often succeed very well in hushing up the voice of conscience, especially when their evil deed does not have immediate evil results, or has not brought disgrace upon them; and even when conscience is not hushed, and its censures are heard, still the accompanying pain is not apt to be so strong, that it would pay, from a selfish point of view, to avoid it by performing some great sacrifice.

No, although between duty and self-interest a closer bond exists than egoists generally admit, although in most cases the way of duty is the way to one's own happiness, nevertheless this coincidence is not complete. It is the more nearly complete, the more perfectly a society is organized and the better the various sanctions do their work, and the stronger the moral sentiments are developed in men; one of the greatest tasks for mankind to perform is to bring about as widely reaching a harmony between duty and self-interest as possible; this like all the greatest blessings must be reached through their own work. But never will this harmony be absolutely perfect and an uncompensated sacrifice be an impossible thing. It is not true, and will

never be true, that in ethics the question is only as to "who loves himself in the best and truest manner—as if the height of wisdom were to be rightly selfish." It is not true that "vice may be defined to be a miscalculation of chances, a mistake in estimating the values of pleasures and pains—it is a false moral arithmetic." Virtue can really require sacrifice; it is really no illusion that it is disinterested and not only a far-reaching prudence—the general belief that egoism is not a moral way of living is not groundless.

Surely it is a very dangerous doctrine although flattering and agreeable, "that the best way to help others is to secure one's own (real) advantage." But that the best way to attain personal advantage is the way of duty, is not a wholesome theory; for, by representing it as though the way of duty must be justified from the point of view of selfish interest, it strengthens the selfish tendencies in man and stands in the way of moral development.

Man is really not a selfish being, and it is not necessary to establish morality upon that error. He is not constrained to inquire before all else after his own greatest happiness; he is also able to strive for that of the community, although he knows that he himself must often suffer and give more than he receives; he is able to rest satisfied with the happiness which the consciousness of a well-ordered life affords him.

### (3.) *The Consciousness of doing Right as the Final Moral Aim.*

Is, then, the advancement of the common weal the right aim of life? Does the very recognition of universal happiness as the ultimate moral standard imply that it is also the final aim? Men have very often thought so; but for the most part the only reason has been that they have formed no clear ideas as to the proper meaning of *moral standard* and *final aim* and hence have not recognised the difference between them. By the final aim we understand that part of the foreseen consequences of an act which is aimed at directly, and not simply as a means to something further. By the attainment of it, the act becomes successful; by failing to attain it, the act becomes a failure. Then the question

as to the final moral aim of life is : what thought or motive ought a man to try to bring into supremacy in his consciousness, what consequences of his conduct ought he regard as regulating and as stamping the conduct as a moral success, what ought he to accustom himself to consider his highest good ? The moral standard, on the other hand, lets us discover what acts are right and what dispositions of the will are good, what discipline for the mind is morally enjoined ; it also answers the question toward what final object a man should direct his life.

The choice of a life-aim is a mental act and the moral standard determines the worth of acts. The question what that aim ought to be will, therefore, be answered by deciding what aim being chosen would have the tendency to further most the universal happiness. Would this be furthered most by being itself made the ultimate aim of life ?

If it were made the aim, then in every case where the effort to attain it were without success, the act would have failed morally. Consider, now, how uncertain the issue of our undertakings often is, how often the best intentions are thwarted by accident or the hostile purposes of others, how often a man's life comes to an end before he can actualise his plans. Imagine a case—a scientific investigator spends long years and his best energy in elaborating a work the completing of which, being of great worth to mankind, he regards as the one task of his life. Thereupon a conflagration destroys his house and the work of his life has come to nothing. He falls ill and approaches his death hour. Ought he now to say : all my work was in vain, my whole life has been a moral failure ? That would be very unwise. But he would have to say it, if the advancement of human welfare were his final aim. The choice of this aim is not wise ; for its attainment can easily be brought to nought through external circumstances. If a man is to be preserved from discouragement and despair he must have a goal, the reaching of which depends alone upon himself—a goal which makes him independent of everything outside himself, which gives him a firm hold in all situations of life, and keeps him erect, over against adverse attacks of fortune. The only

fixed and sure object which will bestow consolation and gladness is the consciousness of having done one's best to further the universal welfare—the consciousness of duty done. "If I only have these, I do not ask for heaven and earth." Man ought to make his final aim in life the attainment of this consciousness, not the attainment of outward results.

A thing, the attainment of which is subject to doubt, anything which is so much in the hands of chance and depends so much upon the favourable situation of the individual, is poorly suited to become the final aim of life for all men. It is true that the happiness of mankind may well be an object of glowing enthusiasm for many. But will it hold them steadfast if their most important undertakings fail? And can it inspire everyone? Will not the poor and weak, the ill and neglected, say: it is very well for you who are rich and powerful, for you who are princes and statesmen; and yet may even you not despair of attaining it? But we, how little can we do, how poor and weak we are in this matter compared with you! Such an aim cannot make us enthusiastic to do right. Is not the moral teacher able to offer men something which we as well as the richest and most powerful can attain?

Everyone, whatever be his condition, can so act as his best conviction tells him is for the welfare of mankind under the given circumstances. Should the actual consequences turn out otherwise, still the consciousness remains with him of having done his best. "The consciousness of doing right is a goal which the beggar as well as the king in every moment of his life may attain; it is a highest good, which no outward power can rob him of, which brings to his spirit rest and peace, whatever may befall him. How a man is moved, how he is lifted up in heart when he discovers that what will bring him strength and confidence lies so near at hand."

To make the consciousness of doing right one's highest aim does not mean to make it the only aim. It does not mean to suppress all other motives. On the contrary, whoever chooses it will seek to develop and strengthen in himself all those feelings which make it easy to do right.

Whoever chooses the consciousness of doing right as the supreme thing must devote himself to the service of mankind, so far as he makes universal welfare the criterion of action. The thought of this ultimate aim will prevent a man from being blinded by his own self-interest when he is called upon to decide what right and duty are, and from yielding to besetting sins in the fancy that he will make reparation by some other deed that will further general welfare. While he who seeks outward successes will be only too easily discouraged and held aloof from further efforts if the attainment of them is continually disappointed; he, on the other hand, who pursues the inward aim, will remain undisturbed to the end in the service of the right. He will remain strong and steadfast whatever fate may threaten him and his plans. Will he who chooses the moral sanction as his final aim be happy? We can only answer so much, that he can never become quite unhappy. He will be happier than one who makes the furtherance of general welfare his object; for he will be more independent of outward fortune. If his service for mankind is successful, he will have the pleasure of outward success as much as the other; and if, without his fault, unexpected consequences adverse to mankind arise, the consciousness of having nevertheless attained his controlling aim and highest good will sustain him. He does not trouble himself, for he knows that he to-morrow, as well as to-day, may lead the higher life and reach the highest good. A man is always successful if he only will do right. He knows no vacillation, the painful indecision of those who do not pursue a fixed aim; his path is always determined by the star of duty. Should he fall ill, he knows that illness will bring him new duties, and that the fulfilment of them will sanctify and strengthen him. Should death approach him, the thought of his well-spent life, and his love of those who will survive, may well console him. Should death tear from him the fondest treasure of his heart, he knows that all mankind ought to be the object of his love.

"The glory of a good man," says Thomas a Kempis, "is the testimony of a good conscience; have a good conscience and thou shalt ever have joy; a good conscience is able to bear very

much and is very cheerful in adversities; an evil conscience is always fearful and unquiet. Thou shalt rest sweetly if thy heart do not reprehend thee. Never rejoice but when thou hast done well. Sinners have never true joy, nor feel inward peace."

If the advancement of universal welfare is made the aim, the moral appeal must be to universal benevolence and love. But how weak are these feelings with most men, how inadequate to overthrow the powerful instincts of self-interest and passion! And how much it depends upon the mood of the man, how poorly it is adapted to guarantee the steady uniformity of just conduct, which is the distinguishing mark of real virtue. Benevolence and the moral impulse are not the same, and the moral appeal proper is to the moral feelings. The moral feeling exhorts us to act rightly, to do deeds the expected consequences of which would be for the general good; but benevolence would fain realise schemes for the public good, and it fails of its object when the result is not forthcoming. When I, to my own danger, do something which I think would further the general interest, but the actual unforeseen consequences of which are different, my benevolence gives me pain, my conscience gives me joy. Thus the direct analysis of our moral faculty shows that universal happiness is not the true *aim* of moral action.

Man has a deep inward yearning after some kind of happiness; if he does not find it on earth he seeks it in some other world. But he has also a deep inward yearning after holiness, and often a secret dissatisfaction and unrest at the thought of his own conduct. The teaching of ethics ministers to this twofold longing, in that it teaches him to renounce his greatest happiness and to strive for holy happiness, for moral blessedness.

Ethical teaching does not require a man merely to live for others. Have only others rights? Does he not and ought he not himself wish to be blessed? It does not require him to give his whole present life up to distant ideals and to the culture and interest



of future generations. Has only the future rights? It requires him to live for that which is best in himself, to create his own present blessedness by doing what will benefit mankind.

It may be complained that this is a selfish conception of morality, and that men have a moral intuition that conduct must be disinterested. Some say that the joy of conscience will not be attained if it is striven after: "That conscience hesitates to ratify the bargain." Now the bargain would indeed be a very bad one; as a bargain it would be as foolish as if one would pay out a thousand pounds for a commodity which was not worth ten. Does conscience hesitate to close the bargain? Have you tried? Is it selfish? Is it indeed selfish, voluntarily, once for ever, to renounce one's greatest happiness and strive only for peace of conscience? Oh that no one were without this selfishness! You who call this selfish, ask yourself: "Do I know myself to be without sin? and can I find a better and surer means for making myself more nearly perfect?" Do you not refuse to choose this aim exactly because you do not wish to be better and more unselfish? According to Kant "every good and moral disposition can be grafted on to self-respect, when it is well grounded, when the man shrinks from nothing more than to find himself worthless and contemptible in his own eyes, when he examines his heart; because self-respect is the best, indeed the only watchman who can keep off the encroachment of ignoble and perverted impulses from the spirit." Would a man whom you now revere sink in your estimation, would you say that he simply served a more refined egoism, if you discovered that the final aim of his life was to stand unblamed before the inner judge?

It is a very ancient regret that the direct impulse to do one's duty is for the most part very weak, that a man knows what is right a hundred times more than he wishes to do it. Then call to your help the thought of the moral retaliation which your conduct will find within yourself. That will often give you strength to withstand temptation, and consolation in suffering and sorrow. The moral sanction puts a man into a position to live and do worthily without the consolations of an unjustified faith.

Let us glance back over our considerations. We discovered what the criterion of morals is, and how we can determine what conduct is right, and then we asked how a man can best accustom himself to right doing : whether the best means be not to bring some efficient motive into supreme control in his life ? We became convinced of the error of the view that self-interest is at the basis of all human actions ; this error we saw sprang from a confusion of two quite different phenomena ; the emotional and the intellectual sides of acts of the will. The fact that those conceptions, which are directly bound up with the greatest feeling of happiness and the least unpleasantness, determine a man's action, had led to the false notion that the idea of one's own greatest future happiness, or freedom from pain, always determines the will ; while in reality the idea of the happiness of others, or that of duty, exercises more influence on our present feelings, and thereby on our conduct, than the idea of our own welfare. Self-interest is not the only, and not the controlling impulse in human conduct ; ought it to be ? This in any case would be possible only upon the presupposition that individual and social welfare are always in perfect agreement ; the consideration of the efficiency of the various sanctions convinced us, however, that this is not the case. All, with the exception of the moral sanction, may, under certain circumstances, bring upon right-doing severe evils ; but the moral sanction of itself is often unable to make right conduct egoistically prudent. Virtue and far-sighted selfishness are not really the same ; and for that reason one ought not to cultivate self-love. Only for one form of one's own happiness ought one to strive—the peace of conscience. He who sets up this inner aim will act better, and more in accordance with the public good, than he who strives for the furtherance of the general welfare as his final aim ; and therefore a man ought to choose the former aim. The supreme moral law, the categorical imperative, receives therefore this form : *Seek peace of conscience in devoting thyself to the welfare of mankind.*

## CHAPTER IV.

### DUTY.

"Whatever else I may doubt,  
I cannot doubt the law of duty."

W. M. SALTER.

#### (1.) *The Conception of Right. Feeling and Reason.*

ETHICS must answer the question: "How ought I to act?" Now what is meant by "I ought"? Our previous investigations have prepared us for the answer.

"I ought" often means simply that something is the desire, will, or command of another. "You ought to do it," often signifies no more than "I wish you to do it," and "I ought to do it" only means "He wishes me to do it." "Ought" in these cases means the demand of one person's will upon another's. But clearly that is not the moral ought. Is that right which another requires of me? I ask myself, so far as I am a moral being. If it is not right, I will not do it; if right, I will do it; but not because it is required, but because it is right. But what does it mean to say, it is right, it is wrong?

These are the most general terms to express moral valuation. There is such a thing as worth only in relation to the feelings: only that which causes a certain class of feelings which we call moral, has moral worth or worthlessness. If these feelings were lacking in a man, if he felt no respect or contempt at contemplating the deeds and characters of others, no love or indignation, and if in contemplating his own deeds or character he was conscious of no satisfaction or dissatisfaction; right and wrong, duty, virtue and vice would have no meaning to him. He would not be a moral

being. These feelings and mental facts are the foundation of ethics. The psychologist or anthropologist may examine how they have arisen; the moralist starts out with them as a *fact*. Without these feelings there is no ethics, no morality.

But, also, without reason there is no morality, and therefore no ethics. Man thinks as well as feels. Experiences of various kinds lead him to reflect upon that which excites his moral feelings, and to bring the matter out clearly in its unity and connections. The reason fixes in abstract conceptions that which is common to man; it notes cases where approval or disapproval is awakened, the consciousness of rules arises; out of many single rules universal principles are inferred, which in their turn may be made the starting point for deductions.

By *right* or *wrong* we mean that which agrees with or contradicts a rule of action, which we recognise. These rules are valid, not only for us, but for all members of society. By them we judge not only our own conduct, but that of others. The exercise of reason is therefore necessary. The conception of a rule, the application of it in a given case, the notion of other conscious beings, the idea of the whole of a life, and of a society, the consideration of special relations in life, the knowledge of the consequences of action—all come only by the exercise of reason. All deliberations as to right and wrong, all discussion with others upon these themes, all changes of moral opinion brought about by argument, show that morality is not purely an affair of the feelings. Were it so, ethics would lose all its practical significance.

The idea of right and wrong, and every judgment concerning right and wrong, implies an exercise of reason, as it expresses the relation of a particular case to a general rule. But feelings are back of the idea of right and wrong; every rule is extracted from facts of feeling, and this is the reason why ideas of right possess motive power.

Writers have often tried to represent morality as a matter of pure reason. But the grounds they give for so doing only prove that reason is a necessary, but not the only, or the most essential condition of morality.

The domain of ethics is recognised as the most important and valuable, because it comprises the feelings. The whole vocabulary of ethics—all words like good, noble, great, honourable, holy, or common, mean, evil—prove that feelings are the beginning and the end of morality. The idea that a thing is right and good is regarded as the essentially moral motive; it cannot therefore be a conception of pure reason, it must have feelings bound up with it—without feeling there is no will or action. Ethics sets up purposes, purposes are objects for the will, and the will implies feeling. If reason were the essence of morality, then whatever was rational would have moral significance. Every error would be wrong, and every wrong an error. The most intellectual man would be the best morally, and the least intelligent would be the worst. Also it would be past explanation how men have come to recognise so great differences of degree in duties and transgressions, and to condemn, for example, murder, so incomparably more severely than a lie, since the agreement or disagreement with reason cannot admit of degrees.

In morals do we speak of true and false deeds? No, but of good and bad. Murder is not false, not irrational, but bad. Arnold von Winkelried's act was not true, or correct, or rational, but good. If we occasionally speak of a false line of conduct, we mean one founded on a mistake, *i.e.*, in which the proper means to the end in view are not chosen. To be a criminal, one needs not to have made any mistake, and one may have chosen the best means. In planning and executing his deed a man may exercise a high grade of reason. Universal consciousness testifies to the truth that in morality the intellectual side of a man is not the foremost; it regards as the essential thing not a good head but a good heart.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> I may be allowed to make some quotations from Lombroso's work, "The Criminal:" "It is not to be denied that here and there a real genius of a criminal is to be found, a creator of new forms of crime, a real inventor in the bad. Surely Vidocq was a man of intellect: he twenty times escaped the law, and knew how to deliver over into the hands of justice some hundred criminals, and finally wrote a true psychology of crime." "Kraft-Elbing and Schülle say on this subject of moral insanity, there are moral idiots in whom

The mere fact that no moralist has ever succeeded in deducing a single moral specification from pure reason, might make the *à priori* moralists pause a moment. The principles of reason, the laws of thought, hold good for everything, and consequently for ethics; but they have no special ethical significance, and no contents can be drawn from them. Out of what is purely logical, follows the purely logical, out of the mathematical comes only the mathematical. What men have given out as intuitive, rational principles of ethics, have been simply logical and mathematical propositions, in reality mere applications of the principle of identity to material already given and presupposed—indeed of the highest value, but on account of their purely formal nature, incapable of bringing forth any ethical contents. Reason forms the conception of rules, and brings particular cases under the rule, without regard to special feelings; she applies the rules impartially, she moves from like to like. For the widening of sympathy and the sense of justice she clears the way with that question, which in the struggle against slavery played so great a rôle: “Am I not a man and a brother?” But out of mere reason no rules of right and no human love issue. It was not mere reason which commanded William I. to insert this view in his “Principles of life:” “I will preserve and keep alive in myself a sincere and cordial benevolence toward all men, even toward the least—for they are my brothers.”

That is right which agrees with an ethical rule. But how was the rule determined? Apparently by induction or deduction. When arrived at by deduction, we finally mount to the ultimate rule, which cannot be further deduced from anything else; and is, therefore, based, apparently, on induction. But the emotions are lacking . . . along with that, however, they know perfectly well what can serve or injure them, but they have not the slightest feeling for the weal or woe of others—for all that men regard as good and beautiful.” Vigna, the director of the insane asylum for women at St. Clemente, says of two of his patients: “their memory is excellent, their understanding fine, their information considerable and many-sided. But they both are selfish and without any real feeling. The criminal, indeed, knows what justice is, but he has no feeling for it.”

induction out of what? Out of the sum total of the objects which awaken moral approval or disapproval. Certain philosophers have said that the rules of morality, or at least some of them, the highest, are not reached by induction or by deduction, but by immediate intuition; they are self-evident, not capable of proof or needing it. Now, it is characteristic that those who believe in self-evident rules of duty, seldom tell us what these are. And when they do, the rules turn out to be purely formal, so that they do not settle for us any questions of ethics, or they are such as do not receive universal recognition, which, if self-evident, they would receive. Self-evident rules would allow of no exceptions, but of all those which have been set up, many persons do justify exceptions. The fact is that some people regard every belief, every conviction which they hold firmly, as an intuition. Some say, there is in truth only one really self-evident moral intuition, namely, that we must act for the universal interest. Certainly this may become a fixed conviction, surer than any other in the sphere of morals—inasmuch as it is the focus in which all the rays of right conduct converge—and it may become as strong as if it were an intuition. But it cannot be called one, because it is not originally immediate and self-evident, and is not accepted by many intelligent beings. “Let justice be done, though the heavens fall,” has been held by many to be a categorical imperative, and it does not appear as though that imperative meant to express simply the opinion that justice is the necessary condition of the universal welfare. In fact, we do not doubt but that it is possible to bring every intelligent educated member of a civilized society, if the right didactic method be pursued, to recognise that conduct in conformity to universal welfare is always right. But this conviction will be brought about by argument, discursively, and not by intuitive perception.

The discovery of the highest principle of morals is a rational act; so is the deduction from that principle, in the same way as the discovery of the laws of mechanics and deductions from them are the work of reason. But as little are the truths of morals to be drawn from pure reason, as are those of mechanics; the empiri-

cal basis of the latter is the course of outward nature, of the former a definite class of inner experiences, namely, feelings of a distinct kind.

The moral feelings, respect and contempt, reverence and moral disgust, peace of conscience and remorse, are not operations of reason, but simply feeling; the ethical rationalists must ultimately see that. But, they say, these feelings are only an effect of the knowledge of the agreement or disagreement with the rules of right; the rules are first, the feelings second. But let us for once suppose that there are such rules of pure reason, still it is not at all apparent how they should call forth those manifold and various feelings. How we go from the feelings to the rules is easy to see: reason does its work of abstracting and generalising the material of moral experience just as of any other experiences; it classes together different acts which call forth similar moral feelings, it brings the particular under general rules, and with more or less distinctness discerns the importance of the application of these rules for the security and welfare of society. But how we should have passed from the rules to the feelings is beyond comprehension, had not the rules themselves been first abstracted from the feelings; and if they were, then there are no rules of pure reason.

Therefore in a twofold manner estimations of moral value may be made; directly through the feelings, and indirectly by reference to the moral rules which themselves presuppose the feelings. According to a man's disposition, education, mental training and conditions of life, the one or the other method of measuring worth will prevail; if a case of conduct is decided by reference to a general rule, the rational process which preceded and which involved perhaps the consideration of complicated relations and the determining of distant consequences, may have stretched through a long period of time, while the man's emotional condition need not be essentially different from what it is in any other investigation of a purely scientific kind; and when the final judgment that a thing is right or wrong is made, the state of the emotions may be one slightly removed from one of complete indifference. It is,



therefore, very natural—that those who do not examine the origin of moral rules and only consider the second process of estimating moral values, and do not stop to think what state of emotions they would have, if they were witness of an act of great moral value—it is only natural that such should be misled into making moral judgment merely a matter of reason.

Another circumstance which has led to this same theory is the old opinion that man's essential nature consists of reason, an opinion which most of the ancient philosophers entertained and which in the middle ages prevailed universally. It rested in part upon an indefinite conception of what reason is, (under that term was sometimes included anything which was conditioned by intellectual activity) and in part upon an imperfect analysis of mental processes. A more exact observation of human nature has taught that, if in general we may speak of the essence of man's nature, feeling and willing are the more essential. The whole activity of man as a conscious being is conditioned by feelings; everything to which men assign worth has its worth only by virtue of his feelings. The thinkers of the middle ages sometimes spoke of man as a being intermediate between animal and angel. Angels were, according to their conception, purely rational beings; man would become an angel when he lost all his characteristics except reason. Now-a-days we have no more interest in stories about angels and devils. But this we can say, that if angels are to be called blessed, that if men may well wish to be like them because of their blessed state, they cannot be purely rational beings, and rationality cannot appear the important thing to men. Or is even blessedness also to be called an activity or a state of reason?

If anyone sees something degrading in the doctrines that feelings are the ultimate basis of morality, it is because he does not make any distinction between various feelings, and does not take into account that human life is raised above animal existence, not only through a higher intellectual, but equally through a higher emotional development. As various as the good and evil things of man's life, are his feelings; for things become good or evil

through feeling. "If pain of conscience were only pain," some one has said, "it would have to be borne, nay, we would gladly accept it ; but it is the consciousness of having betrayed our best friend that dumfounds us ;" the fact expressed by such phrases is that the pain of conscience can make us so unhappy that we would gladly exchange it for any physical pain. Some have further objected : "Ethics treats of what ought to happen, not of what does happen ; how can we then make something which is only a fact, mere feelings, the basis of ethics ?" But reason also is a fact, as much as feeling is. And if there were nothing actual at the basis of ethics it would be a meaningless fiction. The objection arises from a mistake of logic, occasioned by the double meaning of the word *actual*. Ethics is a science of ideals. Ideals are a certain class of ideas, are therefore facts of consciousness having their reality in their presence in the mind. But these ideas relate to something outside themselves which does not yet exist, but the existence of which is striven after. They are, therefore, something actual that relates to something not actual.

Let us tarry a while over the contrast between the real and the ideal. By the former we understand everything that calls forth sensations. If all sensations were neither pleasant nor painful, there would be no ideals as well as no worth in anything, no good or evil. Feelings are the only foundation on which ideals may be built. But they, alone, create no ideals, fancy and reason must co-operate with them. By comparing various states of feeling or various things which excite them, the conception arises of a better and a worse. The free play of fancy eliminates from the picture of memory whatever displeases, and combines all which was pleasant into new pictures ; and various kinds of thought-activity may guide this process of constructing ideas. The thought of the better, outside or within us, the idea that we may realize it if we wish, the yearning to do so, the feeling that we are under obligation to do so, this is the true moral lever, the well-spring of progress. "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness ; for they shall be filled." Only when this feeling moves a man's heart, when he attains the conscious-

ness of his power to change things in himself, or outside, to something better or worse, when the sense of his creative responsibility has been felt in him, only then is he morally awake. Every reformer is an idealist. He compares that which his eye sees with the better which his soul beholds, with his ideal, and he condemns and combats the real. But what leads him into this combat, what makes him find there his true life and converts him into a hero, must be a real thing—it is a cosmic power, the power of moral feeling.

It is brought forward as a further objection that feelings are something purely subjective, whereas morals need an objective basis. But all who say this do not seem to know that everything with which we have to do is subjective, that all theoretical science is made up of answers to the questions: what sensations do or would exist under given conditions? what have or would have existed? and what sensations will exist? A thing can have existence for us only when in relation to our consciousness; it can have value or importance only in relation to pleasure or pain.

Many who require an objective basis for morals do not understand anything alien to human consciousness, but something common to all individual human beings. What I hold to be right, they say, every one else must also; if they do not, either I am in error or they are. But that which is common to men, that which binds them together, it is said, is reason alone; feeling, taste, varies, and about matters of taste we cannot contend. To base ethics on the feelings, according to them, would be to put an end to ethics.

They are quite right when they say that in morals one cannot remain merely in the feelings; but they are wrong when they think that it has nothing to do with feelings, and that ethical truths are founded in reason. Not a single moral specification follows from pure reason. Pure reason cannot produce action at all, and hence cannot produce moral action. If they were right in the statement that only reason, not feeling, is alike in men, and binds them together, there would not be any ethics.

We have been convinced that in the feelings which conduct

and character call forth, there prevails a uniformity which, with the progressive development of the race, has continually increased. The circumstance that our judgments as to feeling do not always agree with those of others, that among our own there is not always harmony, forces us to go beyond our immediate feelings, and out of them themselves to abstract rules, and finally to attain a universalised and supreme rule. Precisely because a general agreement exists between my feelings and those of others, others are wont to recognise as valid for themselves the rules which I hold as binding. The agreement is greater between the rules I hold and those they hold, than between our respective feelings, because in the abstraction of the rules from the feelings many individual variations are overlooked, and many rules also are arrived at by deduction from a universal rule.

How shall I act when there exists no agreement between myself and another in the moral judgment of a given case, and I yet should like to bring about such an agreement? It will not come simply by the expression of feelings, but only by reasoning. I must try to convince the other that the decision of the question, in the way I look at it, follows by logical inference directly from some moral rule which he himself accepts. If the rule given is recognised by both of us, we may in such a case speak of truth and error, of correct and false, quite as much as in regard to any other question. "It is true or false that this and this follow from that and that rule" is a perfectly correct expression. If as the supreme rule the imperative be given that action must conform to the demands of public welfare, the settling of all duties becomes an affair of strictly scientific knowledge. But how are we to attain those rules which cannot be deduced from other rules? Only by induction from facts of feelings already in our possession. And also here we may speak of truth and error, in so far as the induction can be carried on correctly or falsely. But the moral feelings themselves can be called true or false no more than sensations or nerves and muscles, or the ebb and the tide; they either exist or they do not.

But what if a common recognition of a rule is in no wise to be

attained? What if the other person tells me that a feeling of obligation, of moral pain or delight, that reverence and disgust for certain traits of character are entirely unknown to him? If I come really to the conviction that he is deceiving neither me nor himself by these words, I will not talk with him any more about moral matters, as little as with the blind about colours. But what if the most comprehensive rule which I can draw from the feelings of another demands regard only for his family, or race, or nation, while I would prove the existence of duties towards subjects of other nations? Then I would, under such circumstances, attempt to educate, in some way, his feelings, and give to his sympathy and sense of justice a wider sphere. Should this be impracticable and without success, further transaction with him would be out of the question.

And now we must ask the ethical rationalists how they would act in such a case. What would they do if another should say to them: I cannot act at all out of pure reason, and I regard it as a psychological error for you to fancy you can? And in my opinion no rule at all can be extracted from pure reason, and the injunction, "if you come together with unbelievers, cut off their heads" is logically as unassailable a rule as "all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them." What will the ethical rationalists do if another says to them, and holds to it in spite of all objections (as very often happens), that according to his conviction the only rational maxim is: "every man is his own next neighbour?"

What does it mean when we say to a man, you ought? Clearly we wish to direct him to a given line of conduct. But we can do that only by an appeal to his feelings of fear, of love, or honour, or the like. Now to what feelings would he appeal who says to another, meaning it morally, you ought? To his moral feelings. If by persuasion these feelings are not aroused in another, the latter will not be able to perceive that he ought to do what he is commanded. Perhaps we could coerce him to do the outward semblance of the deed by appealing to fear, or by physical force. But we can make him morally responsible only by awakening his moral impulses.

Ethical rationalists have said that only he who regards pure reason as decisive can really speak with authority and say to another, you ought—no matter what the other's psychological constitution may be. It is scarcely necessary, after all that has been settled, to consider this position. What does it mean to speak with authority? We cannot mean to require something of a person, with a threat of evil which we will inflict in case he refuses; we can only mean to say something which may awaken his respect. Now, is respect an activity of reason, or is it a feeling? To say to anyone that he ought, whatever his psychological formation may be—what can that mean? Perhaps it only means that if I tell another, he ought, I do not regard his special inclination as a criterion, just as when I say, I ought, I do not mean that my ruling wish lies in that direction. But what can the expression, he ought, mean, if, in the constitution of his mind, the moral feelings are lacking? Do we speak to little children, or insane men, or the lowest savages, of the moral ought? Would I ever say to myself, I ought, if I was without moral feelings?

It has been maintained that reason is the only basis of morality because the feelings may change. But does anyone mean to say that the character of a Nero might awaken universal reverence; that assassination, lies, treason and corruptions of any kind could arouse universal love and respect, while the character of a Christ, benevolence, and fidelity, and sincerity, and everything which we now call virtue, could stir up hate and contempt? A moment of deliberation will show us that in such a case mankind would, after a short spell, go to destruction. But the objection is, in fact, not much better than if one should say that pain might sometime become pleasant and an object of desire, or that reason might sometime change; so that two times two would be five, and the whole would be smaller than a part, from which it would follow how insecure all our wisdom is, perhaps mere folly in the eyes of higher, more rational beings.

But still it may be objected that feeling is blind and needs the guidance of reason. Men recognise generally that reason must

have control ; therefore how can we put the power to decide into the hands of feeling ? But this is a figurative way of speaking, and figures of speech often mislead ; in scientific investigations it is at least better to speak in simple unadorned language. Feelings are not blind ; men are blind. Feelings do not have eyes which may be hindered in seeing ; they are phenomena of consciousness, so also are sensations of sight ; and one cannot speak of one such phenomenon as having or not having another. Feelings do not need guidance—man needs the guidance ; it points him the way which will bring him to the goal he has chosen.

I am taking a pedestrian tour, and should like to climb certain mountains because of the beautiful outlook, or for some other reason ; but indeed in the least fatiguing manner, and I take with me a guide because he knows the best paths. The goal he does not set for me, he simply shows me the way. Perhaps he calls my attention to this or that beautiful point which he also advises me to climb ; or he induces me to climb this mountain, and not that which I at first wished to ascend. But even then it is not he who sets the goal, but I ; my will decides, not his. He only helps my thoughts, which may move my will. I wish to visit a certain country for my health or instruction, and I buy a guide book. It does not furnish me with my final purpose of recovering my health, or instructing myself ; but only with the means to attain my end. Or, in the intention of going to a university, I buy a student's guide which gives me information concerning institutions of learning. But a guide would cease to be such if it determined the aim itself and carried its purpose against mine.

Now, persons mean something corresponding to this when they speak of reason as being the guide—"Whatever thou doest do with reason and consider the end." Reason, an eye of higher power, shows us the way which really leads to our goals, and lets us see the consequences of our actions. A father would like to make his child as happy as possible ; reason teaches him the means to that end, it directs his gaze from the present to the future, and lets him perceive the results of his present conduct, the good which will come from the pain he is now inflicting upon his child, the

evil which will come from the pleasure he is now letting his child enjoy. And, likewise, whoever out of human love wishes to help those who are in need is enabled by reason to perceive what will really lead to their well-being. Whoever will read the reports of modern philanthropic movements will be convinced how much reason, wisdom, and shrewdness is embodied in the benevolent works of the present day. But we shall not lead men to become benevolent by appealing to reason or to the head ; not by appealing to intelligent selfishness : but the appeal must be made to human love and to conscience—to feelings. When we have moved the heart, then we can enlighten the head, so that the aims of the heart may be surely reached. Was Christ's summons an appeal to reason ?

Reason is a guide, and, as such, not a ruler and lord. It is not a commander, for it speaks in indicatives, not in imperatives. It treats of what is, not of what ought to be. Imperatives are the language of the will—impulse ; and without feelings there is no will or impulse. The moral dictator is not reason, but moral feeling.

Does reason only give the means to our ends ? Does it not also participate in the setting up of ends ? Certainly it does. It is pre-eminently our highest ends, as we have seen, which involve an activity of reason : one's own greatest happiness, the well-being of mankind, the fulfilling of duty, inward moral satisfaction, are ends which a non-rational being could not at all have ; such a being would not be a moral being. Reason performs its office of comparing and distinguishing, of defining and combining, of inferring from like to like in the province of volitional activities, as well as in every other. Our impulses, and therefore also our aims, are in conflict with one another ; the reason compares them and discovers what is common to them ; it leads before our eyes the absent and the future, and thereby awakens new impulses ; it widens the domain of our wishes by passing on from like to like ; it leads to the knowledge of an order of precedence among our desires, in that it fixes their relative value by applying as a criterion their common characteristic. But the point of application



in all these activities of reason is always something which is not reason, but feeling and impulse, and also the inward pressure toward action, which is attained as the final result, is not an utterance of reason, but feeling and impulse.

(2.) *Ought—Duty—Moral Law.*

The notions of the moral ought, of commandment, duty, law and punishment, are very closely related to one another, and they all originally refer to something outside, to an external relation, and arrive at an internal significance only with fully developed human beings. This holds good for the individual as well as for the race. One volitional being says to another: You ought, because it has power to bring about evil. Commands to do, or to abstain are uttered by the one in the consciousness of his own power, the other obeys in the consciousness of his dependence. So long as the subject only knows the motive of fear, so long as he does not inquire whether the command is right or not, so long as to him to be commanded or forbidden is the same as to be right or wrong, he is not yet a moral being. In the childhood of mankind, as in that of each individual, we find the same phenomenon. Between being commanded, permitted, and forbidden, and right and wrong, no distinction is made: obedience passes as a virtue, disobedience as a vice. The commander who is blindly obeyed is, in one case, the general or the spirit of a departed chieftain, or some other mighty invisible being; in another case the father or the mother or their representatives. A man begins to be a moral being when he begins to judge concerning what happens to him; and not simply the fear of punishment, but also the consciousness that a thing is right and good or wrong and bad becomes a motive in his conduct. Even now-a-days in civilised societies there are grown-up men who take umbrage at the words of Lord Shaftesbury:—"To have awe or terror of the deity does not of itself imply conscience. No one is esteemed the more conscientious for the fear of evil spirits, conjurations, enchantments, or whatever may proceed from any

unjust, capricious, or devilish nature. Now, to fear God any other wise than in consequence of some justly blamable and imputable act is to fear a devilish nature, not a divine one. Nor does the fear of hell or a thousand terrors of the deity imply conscience unless there is an apprehension of what is wrong, odious, morally deformed, and ill-deserving." The transition from a condition of subjection to an outside will to a condition in which the doer of the deed himself gives himself the law is not a sudden spring, but is a gradual change. The beings who command are, in many cases, not an object simply of fear, but their characteristics, or rather those ascribed to them, awaken respect, admiration, reverence, love, and confidence; and accordingly the obedient one is not guided simply by fear of punishment, but also by the wish to please the being worshipped; the command is recognised as good and wholesome, and there comes a time when the really decisive motive is the idea that the command is good, and not that the good is commanded, although the doer of the deed may not yet have reached a clear consciousness of the matter.

The moral ought, commandment, duty, law, expresses that a thing is withdrawn from the free choice of the doer, and does not concern his personal inclination. This holds good of the meaning these words have when the commandment springs from one's own will as well as when it springs from that of another. Only, in the one case the coercive power lies in the will of one or many other persons, and in the fear of threatening evils; in the other case it is a moral feeling in the man himself. When a man discovers that he ought, in the moral sense of the word, to do anything, he feels a certain constraint or coercion in himself to do it, although this constraint may often be weaker than impulses in another direction. It is often quiet, connected with no strong excitement, and so will easily be mistaken for a mere activity of reason. When a man acts against what he believes to be his duty, the consequence is self-condemnation, regret, remorse, which, according to the weight of the offence, may have various degrees of intensity. These feelings in one's own heart constitute the moral sanctions proper—to be open to them is the essence of

moral responsibility. It has been rightly said that every moral injunction, law, or duty, presupposes a sanction, a punishment in case of its violation; but the moral punishment is not in physical pain, which the worst men might inflict upon the best, but is the judgment of one's own conscience.

A man is morally bound only to such actions as lie within the sphere of his soul, that is, such as he is able to execute if he wills, and such as he would do if his moral feelings had the control. The statesman is not bound to carry out the regulations most beneficial for his country, but only to strive with all his might to find out what is beneficial and to carry out what he has discovered to be so.

It has been said that duty must be distinguished from the feeling of duty; the objective existence of duty is entirely independent of the subjective feeling. "Duty is something given objectively which we recognise and have to pursue; feeling may diminish or increase, but duty remains unchanged and the same." "Or does anyone believe that duty decreases in the case of the vicious man because he succeeds in benumbing his conscience and putting his sense of duty to sleep? Does any one think that the just man is therefore the less responsible to do the right because the fulfilling of his duty is lighter and pleasanter to him?" It is evident that such arguments as these arise from a confounding of the non-moral with the moral meaning of the words. It is said duty is something objectively given. But what does that mean? Is duty a thing? Is it an entity which is to be found somewhere outside? No! the meaning is, probably, that it is fixed by some divine law like the ten commandments what duty is, or that the civil code of laws or public opinion determine it. Now, that morals cannot be grounded upon theology has been clearly proved—as we shall see later. We also know that it does not rest upon the paragraphs of a law book or upon public opinion. Many positive laws may be bad, public opinion may go astray. Every one who passes an adverse judgment upon the laws of his country and tries to improve them, every one who attempts to enlighten public opinion takes the point of view that law or public

opinion is not identical with morality. "Duty does not decrease in the case of the vicious man, although he has succeeded in hushing to sleep his sense of duty." But what can this mean? Perhaps it means that we blame a man if he does not observe a certain line of conduct, that we condemn his character, and that he also would do the same if his conscience were awakened again—as is apt to be the case at times even with the hardest criminals. And "the just man is no less responsible to do good because it is easy for him," means: we would blame him and he would blame himself if he did not do it. "The objective existence of duty is not dependent upon the subjective feeling." Perhaps that means to say that the obligation to do a certain deed, or leave it undone, follows from a certain supreme moral law, to the recognition of which we can bring a man, although he does not as yet recognise it.

Every act which conforms to the highest standard of morals is right. Therefore not only to be sincere, to practise justice and benevolence, but also to eat and drink and sleep at the proper time, and to a becoming degree. But those right actions, which in order to be practised to a suitable degree presuppose simply the presence of non-moral motives, like hunger and thirst, we do not call duties, but only those for the execution of which at least sometimes moral feelings are indispensable. Merely sensuous impulses or a personal interest would not always lead to sincere, just and benevolent conduct. To do one's duty is often not easy, but demands an overcoming of inclinations, the coercion of one's self.

Duties are actions which are sanctioned by a punishment of some kind. The sanction peculiar to moral duty is self-blame and condemnation. If I regard an act as my duty and leave it undone, I should blame myself. Not only the doer of the deed judges his own conduct, but others judge it also—just as he judges theirs; and as a rule there exists a greater or less agreement between his and their judgments. With self-disapproval there comes the consciousness of deserving blame from others,

and in many cases comes also their actual, either spoken or unspoken, blame.

Human actions are not only an object of displeasure or of indifferent consideration, but also of applause, gratitude, love and admiration. Deeds which reveal a character exalted above the ordinary level will, according to the degree of their excellence, be regarded as deserving recognition, respect, honour.

Among the deeds which come under the sanction of public opinion three classes may be distinguished: those which are blamed, those the omission of which is blamed, and those which are praised. The first two classes, sanctioned by punishment, are acts of duty or violations of it; deeds of the last class, sanctioned by at least mental reward, are called excellencies. It is not an excellence, but a duty and obligation to do a deed, the omission of which would be punished or blamed. Thus every one is accustomed, in refusing to give thanks and praise, to say that the person only did his duty.

The boundary line between duty and desert is not a fixed and definite one, but the domain of duty in proportion as the moral level of a society rises, widens ever more into the province which beforehand was regarded as that of desert; and it is to be hoped that in this way the average standard of judgment will continually be lifted.

The distinction between duty and desert has, after all, an external significance; it depends upon the judgment of others and the social sanction. In his own judgment and in his conduct, a morally developed man does not inquire what will give him a claim to receive praise, but simply what is right; and he does not compare himself to others, but with his own moral ideal. Therefore, in reference to himself, he only knows duty, not desert. He does not strive for the applause of the world, but for approval within himself, and this he attains only when he does what he holds to be best. "To him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin."

But if the morally developed man does not set up as his aim the applause and reward of the world, but his own approval, and does

not seek to avoid external blame and punishment, but that which is within him, wherein lies the moral significance of the praise and applause which good conduct receives, and the blame and punishment which is inflicted by others for bad conduct? It lies in its reformatory influence. In case it agrees with the inner sanction it strengthens the man's own moral feelings by the thought that others also share them; it acts as a counter-weight to the impulses that are on the side of evil conduct, and it makes victory easier for the moral motives which increase by being continually exercised, and thus are able to overcome ever greater obstacles; and finally, if the view be correct that a condition of dependence upon the will of another always precedes rational self-direction, then the praise and blame of others is an unavoidable condition of the development of moral feelings.

It has sometimes been said that only over against others has a man obligations. But it seems that this view simply comes from a confounding of the moral with the judicial meaning of the word duty. There is no doubt that in a man growing up in perfect solitude the consciousness of duty would not be developed; but also speech and reason would not come to him; he would be a man only in physical form. But every morally developed man will recognise that he is under obligations to do right, to follow the moral law; and that law rules not only social but also personal and private conduct.

And it regulates not only the outward but also the inner life; it bids us guard our thoughts and our feelings. "For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, . . . thefts, false witness, blasphemies"; and out of the heart issues forth all that is good.

What do we understand by the moral law? First, we must ask: what do we understand by law in general? A law, in the proper sense of the word, is a command, which requires a special sort of conduct; and a command is the expression of a demand accompanied by a threat of punishment, if the requirement be not

fulfilled. The civil law therefore is a law in the strict sense of the word. The one who commands is, in this case, a civil authority ; the special kind of conduct required is exactly fixed ; the insistence upon the commands is emphasised by definite punishments which certain officials are appointed to carry out. The law of public opinion, on the other hand, by which is understood the sum total of rules sanctioned in a society by public opinion, is not in that strict sense a law ; for here there are no commands proper, but the relation is such that, whoever is guilty of certain acts, falls under the disapproval or condemnation of his associates, and under all the consequences of being shunned by them. If the social sanction is active in some special exclusive circle of society, there arises a "law of honour," and thus different circles of society and different callings may possess different laws of honour. If the social requirements refer to petty affairs like dress and manners, they constitute a law of fashion or etiquette.

The application of the term law to the uniformities of nature is entirely metaphorical. For in no way can we speak here of commands. A command presupposes a relation between two intellectual volitional beings, one commanding and the other challenged to obey and understanding the summons. Even if we should assume what is scientifically unjustified, that the uniformities of nature are an effect of a creative act of will on the part of a personal divinity, we should not yet have commands ; for here there is no second being to receive and understand the command. The semblance consists in a mark of regularity which the so-called laws of nature have in common with laws proper.

Even in the expression moral law, the word is used in a figurative sense. Most surely the moral law is a command which requires a special kind of conduct, but there exists no relation here between two different persons. The moral law is not one which another person imposes upon a man ; the distinguishing mark of the moral law is that a man imposes it upon himself. And the specific sanction of the moral law is not an external evil which some other being inflicts upon a man, but his own self-condemnation and pain of conscience. The moral law is the sum total of

rules of conduct which man feels within himself bound to carry out. When a man bows before the moral law he does not bow to any outside power, but to the best power within himself. Two sides reveal themselves in men, one which wills the good, and one which, should it come into control, would often lead away from the path of the good.

The moral law, the voice of one's conscience, is a man's highest authority, the supreme judge of good and evil. There is no appeal to a higher court. We can only appeal from our conscience to our conscience better instructed.

When a man begins to subject the civil laws prevalent in a community to his own examination, and holds them up to a standard of worth, there arises the distinction between the positive law, the law as it actually is, and the ideal, higher, or unwritten law, the law as it ought to be, as it would be if it conformed to the standard of value. And likewise arises the distinction between positive and ideal morality, when a man tests according to a standard of worth, the moral ideas that rule in society. As soon as he succeeds in making that distinction, the ideal morality alone is the moral law which he recognises.

The moral law, to the recognition of which mankind is advancing, is, as we have been convinced, the sum total of the rules, the execution of which would cause the lasting welfare of mankind. These rules form for us the ideal morality.

If the precepts of positive law and morality deviate widely in any society from the requirements of social prosperity, such a society cannot thrive; and it must go under if the deviation is very great; as without doubt there have actually been communities in which the civil and moral laws so little accorded with the conditions of life, that they died out.

Let us recapitulate. We saw that morality inheres in the emotional and rational nature of man. If reflection upon the conduct and character of one's self and others awakened no feelings, there would not be any morality; it presupposes not only moral feelings but reason also. Right and wrong signify agreement or disagreement with a moral rule; every moral



judgment, therefore, involves a process of reason ; but the final basis of moral rules themselves is the moral feeling. There would be no ideals and no authority if there were no feelings ; and it is not true that only the reason is alike in all men, and binds them together—feeling does this also. A being without emotion would not understand what feeling is.

The conception of duty, commandment, ought, law, punishment, originally referred to external relations, to the relation of a man to another, or to society, or to an assumed superhuman power, only to the developed man have they an inward moral significance. A man does not become a moral being until he begins to judge concerning the commandments given him, and to set up for himself a standard of right with which he compares lines of conduct, and thus becomes his own lawgiver. That which constrains in the moral law is not any power outside the person himself, but is the power of his own conscience, the condemnation of which is the special punishment which follows the transgression of duty as such ; and a man violates his duty when he does not do that which in every case he holds to be best. A distinguishing characteristic of the moral law—the highest authority for each one—is this circumstance, that not another, but he himself imposes the law upon himself ; it is the whole body of rules, which the man himself feels bound to carry out ; and in proportion as mankind is more highly developed, these rules are such as, being executed, will further the general welfare.

“ Is there a higher law ? ” men have asked in doubt. Certainly there is ! Whence, where, wherefore ? Whence does it come ? Out of the nature of man which has developed itself according to the conditions of its life. Where is it ? In the head and heart of man. Wherefore is it ? For the true happiness of mankind.

## CHAPTER V.

### VIRTUE.

#### (I.) *Virtue.*

VIRTUE is related to duty as a permanent disposition is to a particular act, or as the settled will is to the sense of obligation. Virtue is a well-spring of right deeds. And as duties are right actions, to the execution of which at least at times moral impulses are necessary, so virtue is a disposition of the will which leads one continually to such actions. And vice is a constitution of character which continually leads to violations of duty.

How does virtue arise? Is it simply a work of nature, of the innate impulses? The innate force is undeniably of great importance from the moral point of view. What great differences are displayed in early childhood among children of one family! The education of one child causes the parents great anxiety another seems to develope almost by himself into the noblest moral bloom. And what differences show themselves between the children, on the one hand, whose parents and remoter ancestors were distinguished for kindness and justice, and, on the other, those whose progenitors ended their lives in prison or on the scaffold! Still it cannot be doubted that with rare exceptions, which must be treated in the same way as imbecility or inherited insanity, even in children born in crime, there are germs of goodness which, if they were only discovered early and given the right care continuously, would develope into an effective check to bad tendencies, and would make possible the attainment of moral excellence. Every year the capacity for moral education in an individual undoubtedly grows narrower, but we never know how far it still reaches, and never does moral improvement become entirely impossible. The attempt to influence others morally, or to

discipline one's self is therefore never quite hopeless. And on the other hand the best possible endowments do not secure the attainment of moral excellencies, if educative influences of some sort and self-discipline are not added to them. Mere natural kindness, a good heart, scarcely secures just conduct where self-interest or passion comes strongly into play. The most essential educative and elevating influence is that which the personality of a high-minded man exercises by his example and teaching. Personality wakes up slumbering energies. "A good will is a burning torch which enkindles others." And Solomon said: "He that walketh with wise men shall be wise," and "Ointment and perfume rejoice the heart: so doth the sweetness of a man's friend by hearty counsel."

The awakening and strengthening of the good does not immediately kill the evil; and accordingly a struggle is often necessary if the good is to conquer. Wherefore the Latin name *virtus*, which means manliness, energy, bravery. The oftener a victory has been won, so much the easier it becomes, so much the less effort is needed, and so much the more perfect the moral excellence.

Every virtue can, at least to some degree, be acquired, if the wish to acquire it is strong and lasting enough. This wish leads to right action. The oftener any activity is exercised, the more easy becomes its execution and the stronger the inclination to repeat it. A habit arises. The oftener a right act is done, the less effort it requires, and the more it approaches to being natural. A settled habit is a quality of character; a moral habit is a moral quality. The oftener a violation of duty is repeated, the more the moral energy required to withstand the disposition to evil. Hence the significance of the rule: Beware of the first step! He who remains firm against the first temptation can see its approach a second time with greater serenity.

Just because virtues are qualities of the mind which can be acquired by exercise, and vices are qualities which will not be acquired if the wish to avoid them is strong and lasting enough, virtues and vices are suitable objects of praise and blame. Only that which can be influenced by blame, only that which can be done

or left undone according to wish, is a suitable object of praise or blame. These are the expressions of moral judgments and feelings; by them we move the conscience of another, we quicken or strengthen the moral impulses of his action. If moral blame cannot awaken self-disapproval in another it is inapplicable; enlightenment would be appropriate, but not blame. Censure which expresses only our personal displeasure is as unjustifiable as a punishment for the sake of revenge. If now by praise or blame the moral feelings of another are aroused or strengthened, this will have a greater influence upon his conduct, and it will determine his action if it contains sufficient force; by repeated action in a given direction, habit that way arises, and fixed habits become qualities of character.

Although in the formation of virtue, effort, self-control and the struggle against impulses that lead away from the right are necessary, still it is the distinguishing mark of real, settled virtue that it is active without this self-compulsion. It is in that proportion more nearly perfect, as it is exercised without effort. He who only by summoning all his force of will is able to be temperate, does not yet possess the virtue of temperance; he who must force back his anger by violent effort has not yet learned the virtue of gentleness. And as virtuous and morally excellent conduct does not presuppose self-coercion, as little is all self-constraint, self-denial, and sacrifice virtuous. These latter are not virtuous if they are not directed towards moral ends. Conduct like that of those Indian saints who stand on pillars shows what a man can do, not what he ought to do.

The statement, sometimes heard, that the degree of virtue is equal to the degree of effort and inward struggle which precedes the right action, and that action ceases to bear the character of virtue if it becomes easy and natural, leads to the contradictory statement that the more nearly perfect a man becomes the less virtue he possesses. What makes the right action hard? Impulses and inclinations that lead us to wrong actions. Now the more we suppress these, the more we discipline our nature, the better we become; the easier right

action becomes to us, so much the stronger temptations shall we be able to overcome, and so much the higher moral tasks we can fulfil. We are so much the more righteous the less we feel the disposition to act dishonestly ; so much the more brave the weaker our impulse to run away. The truths which, when inaccurately grasped and carried to false conclusions, seem to have led to that opinion are the following : The designation virtue, or desert, we apply only to one who in his moral constitution is lifted above the average moral level of his fellow-men. The conduct of a man is so much the more deserving the harder it is for the great mass of mankind to act in the same way. But here it is presupposed that he possesses in general the impulses and capacities belonging to human nature ; we could not ascribe to him in any respect temperance if the corresponding capacity to enjoy which leads many to intemperance were lacking in him. Furthermore, if any one in consequence of natural disposition especially inclines to anger or other passions, which easily bring about evil, but still does not let himself be moved to do wrong, but rather remains true to the good and the right out of respect for duty ; this presupposes that the sense of duty in him has a degree of strength, since it is able to overcome such strong impulses in the opposite direction, and this makes him worthy of respect in our eyes. Yes, perhaps we value his conduct in this case more highly than if he had been free from these passions—naturally, not because we regard them as an element of virtue, but because in a given case their presence proves the presence of a still stronger sense of duty. But if a man distinguished for so strong a sense of duty gradually attained a point where he could regulate his impulses and rid himself of what was a blemish in his nature, his virtue would not be the less but the more perfect. In proportion as a given kind of conduct is easy for a man, and has become second nature to him, his conscious effort in this domain of conduct to fulfil his duty will come less into activity, but so much the more efficiently will his moral energy throw itself on other weaker sides of his nature, and so much the more will he approach to perfection. And sometimes the circumstances of life are such that even in spheres of conduct

where right action is easiest for a man, the summoning up of a strong force of will is necessary if the command of duty is to be obeyed. No one, therefore, can dare give up a perpetual watchfulness. Finally, that opinion is sometimes arrived at from the consideration that, when native preference for a special class of good actions exists, we cannot infer from this circumstance that a man will do his duty in other and perhaps more important lines of duty; we should be right in drawing that conclusion only when such actions had been done out of a general sense of duty. The significance of acquiring moral habits does not consist simply in the greater ease with which we do right, but also in the fact that habits secure right actions even in cases where deliberation is barred out. If there is time by deliberating to find out what is right, it only requires an impulse sufficiently strong to do right, and not a special moral habit; but the relations of life often make a sudden action necessary without permitting any deliberation, and in such cases, and only then, the right will be chosen *instinctively*, as men call it, when a moral habit has been acquired.

Virtue is the highest excellence of man. It is not an excellence of the body, but of the mind, and not of the understanding, but of the will. Virtue therefore is excellence of will, or, in short, a good will. Why is it the highest excellence? Because nothing so much accords with the ultimate standard of all values. The character of men is the principal source of the happiness, as well as of the misery, of mankind. Certainly also health, strength, and intelligence are essential conditions of human welfare; but the good will is still more essential, for only it guarantees a benevolent direction of the others. When the controlling springs of action in a man are bad, health, energy, and intelligence make a man only the more of a curse to society. Accordingly Aristotle says every good thing may be misused except virtue.

But although gifts of intellect are not virtues, still a certain development of the understanding is presupposed in ethics. A being without reason, or the power to reflect and picture the consequences of his conduct, is no more a moral being than an animal is. Such a being may be the object but cannot be the

subject of moral action. But morality does not demand a great, only an average intellectual capacity in every man; although at least to one virtue, that of wisdom, higher intellectual faculties belong.

The worth of a quality of character, like that of everything else in the world, is determined by its effects upon the consciousness of joy and pain. To be virtuous means to be efficient morally, or to be of some account to the community. Although all that is beneficial to society is not virtue, still all virtue is beneficial; a virtue which should be unfruitful and without happy effects, which had no power to bring forth any good, is not in truth a virtue. Virtue is a constitution of the will favourable to universal well-being. And vice is the opposite.

Nothing can be a greater error than to think that from the point of view of virtue actions are of secondary importance; inasmuch as excellence of character is the name of a whole group of dispositions to good actions, it is a name for that lasting quality in a man which continually leads to right action. There are people who make much of their disposition, by which they mean their lofty feelings, or noble sentiments, or their quick sensibility, when they read a sublime romance, or their fondness for talking about ethics or morality! Hypocrites and self-deceivers! If they really had a moral disposition they would prove it in their action. To cultivate fine feelings, and all the time sit still with one's hands in one's lap while one's real action is determined by very coarse feelings, is not an ennobling, but a degrading pursuit. Conduct is the only test of moral worth.

Men have sometimes, especially in antiquity, contended whether there is one or are several virtues. Now, we may distinguish a wider and a narrower meaning of virtue; in one case we may speak of virtue in the plural, in another in the singular. In the wider meaning virtue is *an* excellence of character, in the narrower *the* excellence. Every quality of the will favourable to the happiness of all, every habit or inclination toward the fulfilment of a special class of duties is a virtue; and the worth of these depends upon their relative importance for the general weal. Sometimes virtues

have been divided into primary and secondary ; the former are those characteristics of the will, like benevolence, which are directed toward the advancement of universal happiness ; the secondary virtues are such as are necessary to the carrying out of that aim, like energy and endurance, but which may also serve contrary purposes. But when we call a man virtuous, or morally efficient, or speak of his moral excellence, we understand that he possesses the most essential virtues, and that his mental constitution as a whole is favourable to universal weal. A man may therefore possess many virtues without deserving to be called morally excellent, because he lacks the most essential virtues. The surest means, not merely of obtaining separate virtues, but of becoming virtuous, is to make the consciousness of right the final aim of life. "In attaining virtue by habit," says Bacon, "when a man practiseth temperance he doth not profit much to fortitude nor the like ; but while he dedicateth and applieth himself to good ends, look ! What virtue soever the pursuit and passage towards those ends doth commend unto him, he is invested of a precedent disposition to conform himself thereunto."

A man of moral worth possesses, what we call in a narrower sense of the word, character ; we attribute to him a certain fixity and unyieldingness, a steadfastness and uniformity of conduct ; he is therefore to be trusted and confided in ; and he will attain what requires long and patient striving after. His spirit possesses a certain serenity, for he is sure of himself. The will to do right is his controlling spring of action, and he does all he can to discover what is right. He has fixed principles, and follows them without permitting himself to be swayed by transitory pleasure or pain. He has a deep sense of justice and of the rights of others. But he does not think that his conduct toward himself is a matter of indifference ; he knows that he has duties in relation to his own personality as well as to others, and he has respect towards himself. His true aim which he tries every day of his life to attain, although he may not be distinctly conscious of it, is the attainment of moral satisfaction with himself.

Such a man has a disposition of the will truly to help others.



Every one ought to attempt with all his power to approach the ideal of conforming in all his purposes and deeds to this standard. His moral worth is higher the more the morally good characteristics in him outweigh the defects, and his worthlessness is the greater the more the opposite is the case. But no man has simply defects, no one is perfectly vicious, there is something good in every one. A character is not a simple thing, but a system of various impulses; we should look to the reciprocal relation of these if we would determine whether the character is on the side of good or not. If the wish to do right has the upper hand, the disposition of the will is at least morally good, for it guarantees right action. To possess strong impulses is no defect, but it would be, if conscience were too weak to rule and lead them. If a greater deviation from the good is possible where impulses are strong and manifold, still in that case the attainment of a more varied moral excellence is also possible.

In ancient times men sought to set up one ideal moral type as a pattern after which every person was to model himself. But this is quite unjustifiable, because natural endowments and the circumstances of each man's life are very different. The general definition that moral excellence is a disposition of the will productive of social welfare does not exclude individuality, but includes it. Also in the sphere of moral action there is such a thing as originality.

“Be not one just like another, but all be like the highest !

How bring that about ? Let each be perfect in himself !”

Because virtue presupposes a certain proportionateness and balancing of the various forces of character, and has beneficial effects, it is sometimes called mental health. But that is only a figurative and possibly a misleading way of speaking. A bad man may enjoy perfect mental health; with strong passions and strong self-interest, he may possess little benevolence and a weak sense of justice, but he could not be called mentally unsound.

The degree of a man's virtue is made known by the tests which he stands, by the obstacles which he overcomes. “We often do

not know what we are able to do, but temptation reveals what we are," says Thomas à Kempis. There is, indeed, no radical evil in men, and still all their impulses and passions, except the moral feeling, may betray them into evil. The stronger the impulses are which a man is able to overcome, the greater the temptations are which he has outgrown, so much the stronger has he proved his moral power or virtue to be and so much the greater is his "desert." For by moral desert we understand nothing but demonstrated virtue. The most deserving action is that which testifies to the highest virtue; hence is the memory of noble martyrs, who have given up their life for principle, sacred to mankind.

Virtue is excellence, or pre-eminence, or superior constitution of character; only that disposition which excels in goodness the average moral level is called virtuous. And likewise, only that action is worthy of desert which is distinguished above ordinary conduct. For example, maternal love is surely something good; but no one regards it as especially commendable, and it is clearly a great blessing that they do not. One and the same right action may, according to the different average condition of morality in the society in which it is done, have more or less credit.

## (2.) *How to Judge a Moral Act.*

In judging an action we must distinguish two questions, whether it is right or wrong, and what inference we can draw from it as to the character of the doer.

In order to answer these two questions, we must analyze the act into its elements. They are the following:—

(a) *The bodily motion or muscle contraction.*—This is not an object of moral judgment. It can be quite the same in very different actions. When Muley Mahomed shot at a target, and when he shot down men for his amusement, his bodily movements might have been just the same. And there may be a muscular contraction without any deed taking place, the contraction may be produced under certain circumstances by purely reflex processes. When a man in a spasm of pain strikes about him, it is no more an action in the moral sense than

the beating of the heart or the process of digestion. Furthermore, in many actions there is no motion at all in outward act, as in those acts of the will which consist in abstaining from every perceptible motion. To keep silence when others are trying to torture us into confession, or to remain calm when we are attacked with angry words or violence, may be the most difficult and the most valuable of good deeds.

(b) *The consequences of the deed.*—When a deed would have no consequences whatever, which affect in any considerable degree the weal or woe of men, we do not regard it as either moral or immoral. Many hundreds of deeds are done daily which are morally indifferent, because they influence our own welfare or that of others but very slightly.

When Walter Tyrell at that fatal chase of the English king, William Rufus, in the year 1100, shot an arrow at a deer, but the arrow struck against a tree, and rebounding killed the king, he did not commit a wrong act; the deed had evil consequences, but it was not wrong. Or when anyone administers to his sick father medicine, which had been brought from the apothecary for that purpose, but the apothecary having blundered, instead of the prescribed medicine had given poison, the taking of which causes the man's death—in this case, also, the son's act is not wrong although it has dreadful consequences. Or suppose a man wished to kill another, and plunged at him with a dagger; but the point not entering deep, accidentally cut away a diseased part of the body, which on account of the great danger the surgeon had not dared to remove; and suppose that the man assaulted in this way was healed of his dangerous disease by his would-be murderer—as actually happened in ancient times, and is recorded by Seneca—that attempt at assassination would not be a righteous act, although it had a most desirable effect. We wish by all means to control the consequences of an act; but we can control directly only our own purpose as to them, and only by influencing our purposes can we indirectly control the result. To aim—not to hit the mark—is the highest, says Cicero with this thought in mind. Therefore our moral judgment is not concerning outward events,

the muscular movements or the consequences of our actions, but is confined to the inner, the mental side of the act.

(c) *The act of the will which precedes the deed.*—If such an act does not precede the outward motion or immobility, in other words, if the deed has not been intended, there is no act at all. If a man is struck down by another and his falling injures his health, or if in any other way by the application of mechanical force his body is made use of to produce motion, or if his silence or inactivity when he ought to speak or act, is only the result of sudden paralysis he has not acted at all ; he has suffered, but not acted. But the mere act of willing is not an object of moral judgment ; it is neither right nor wrong, it belongs to all volition. The question here is not that a man has willed, but *what* he has willed.

(d) *The purpose ;* that is, all foreseen consequences which were willed either as an end or as a means, all which in the moment of volition the man believed his act would produce.—Let us take an example. Some years ago a man named Thomas had a box, which was highly insured against loss, put on board a ship ; the box contained a machine with a clock attached, and so arranged that after a certain time an explosion would take place. His purpose was to cause the ship to go down by means of the explosion, and to get his insurance money for the box. Or another example :—A labourer, who was very grateful to his employer for a kindness done him, set fire to an old dilapidated barn which he knew was well insured and would soon be torn down in order to put up a new building. His purpose was to burn down the building and help his benefactor to get the insurance.

It is the purpose, which primarily decides the question whether an act is right or wrong. The act is wrong if the thing purposed is contrary to the general welfare. The deed of the murderer, Thomas, was in the highest degree wrong, because what he purposed was in the highest degree injurious to society. But, also,

the deed of the labourer was wrong, because the burning of a house is a misfortune to the community. Somebody shoots at a mad dog, but quite innocently hits a man ; his deed is, notwithstanding its unhappy consequences, a good act, provided he had taken every precaution that no one should be endangered. A man in the woods waits ready to shoot a traveller and rob him ; he pulls the trigger of his gun, but it misses fire ; although his deed has no external consequences it is no less wrong than if it had.

As a rule the immediate actual consequences of a deed correspond to those which are purposed. If I wish to cut a piece of bread with a knife, I generally cut the bread, although it may happen, as an exception, that I cut myself or someone else. When I intend to put sugar into a cup of coffee, I generally do so, and yet I may instead put in salt or arsenic. Inasmuch therefore as the immediate actual consequences generally correspond to those intended, we assume, if there are no special circumstances pointing in the contrary direction, that what men by their deeds have immediately brought forth was also in their purpose.

But if an act is to be right, a still further condition must be fulfilled ; that which is in the man's purpose must not simply accord with the general welfare, but the man must also have taken the proper care to make himself certain that what he purposes may not have a predominance of evil effects. In order to excuse the apothecary who puts up poison instead of medicine it is not sufficient to show that his mistake was not intended ; it must be shown that the accident could not have been foreseen even had conscientious caution been exercised. A woman was once in a laundry with her child six months old ; as she had to run an errand she gave the child into the hands of a neighbour who was also in the laundry. Soon after, in order not to carry the child continually about, and in order to keep it warm, the neighbour set it upon the cover of a wash tub filled with boiling water. Suddenly the child made a motion ; the lid turned over and the child fell into the boiling water. Evidently the circumstances of the case were such that a person of ordinary con-

scientiousness would have had sufficient thoughtfulness to see the danger of such an act and have avoided it. Even the conduct of the mother would have been wrong in case she had not had sufficient ground to trust her neighbour. Errors of this kind are called culpable negligence.

We have therefore one more element of conduct to distinguish :—

(e) *The conviction that an act will not have a predominance of evil effects.*—If the circumstances of the case are such that a person has reason to fear such consequences,—if he could foresee them, provided he considered the circumstances sufficiently, and deliberated as to the possible effects of all he purposed, but yet does the deed, it is wrong.

(f) *That part of the purpose which is desired not simply as a means but wholly as an end.*—As a rule not all of the expected results of a deed are directly wished for, but only a part of them ; and this part of the purpose, the idea which by means of the feelings prompts the act, is called the spring to action, or the motive. The spring to action in the case of the labourer we cited was to bring advantage to his employer ; the spring to action in the case of the man Thomas was to enrich his own purse.

(g) *The impulse determining the action or the feeling which drives one to act.*—By means of the impulse or feeling which an idea awakens, the idea becomes a motive ; mere ideas without the mediation of feelings do not move the will. The feeling or impulse is also often called the motive. Sometimes, therefore, we understand by motive the idea of the event desired as the final aim, and sometimes the personal feeling which gives energy to the idea to work upon the will and makes it the incentive. As both the incentive and the impulse always co-exist—the idea becomes an incentive only by awakening an impulse—this double use of the word

motive will not easily lead to conclusions essentially erroneous. The impulse which determined the labourer to burn the house was gratitude ; that which determined Thomas was pecuniary interest.

The part of the purpose which is the final aim or the incentive, the sixth element, is not the decisive one in the question whether the act is right or wrong. Against the final aim of the labourer or of Thomas no objection can be brought, but that does not justify their acts. Parent-Duchâtel informs us of "a number of mothers who, when abandoned by their husbands, in order to support and educate their children betook themselves to a life of shame ; and of daughters who did likewise to support their parents." Their motive to educate children, or to care for parents, was surely not a bad one ; but it does not justify their conduct. A man is responsible, not only for that which he desired as the final aim, not only for that part of his purpose which he seeks directly, but for all that he purposed or foresaw as the consequence of his deed at the time of the action. This is what men mean when they say that a man must not do evil that good may come, since the end does not justify the means.

Also the seventh element, the impulse underlying the action, does not decide whether the action is bad or good. The impulse of the labourer was the feeling of gratitude, that of the women love ; now, gratitude and love are surely not bad, but that does not make the deeds good. There is no impulse which always leads to good actions, and none which always brings forth evil. Maternal love may prompt deeds of heroic self-sacrifice, but also of extreme injustice. The desire to get a great reputation may lead to deeds beneficial to society, but also to most pernicious results. Pecuniary interest is the impulse of a great part of the crimes committed, and also of the good deeds done. The man who works a week long on a building, and the man who strikes him down and robs him of his week's wages, act from the same impulse—a desire to gain money. Religious motives were the source of many benevolent undertakings, but they have often

sanctioned the direst wrongs. Partiality, hypocrisy, faithlessness, treason, theft, yes, murder and assassination may arise from some motive of benevolent interest directed towards some one person. Yes, even universal benevolence and the sense of duty may lead to unjust deeds if wisdom do not accompany them. An act does not become right by having a motive of duty underlying it. To say that a deed is done from a sense of duty means that the doer did it because he thought it right. But what anyone thinks to be such is not therefore right. If it were, there would exist no difference at all between right and wrong, because the same deeds are looked upon as right and wrong ; they would therefore according to that hypothesis have to be both right and wrong. When a man asks : What is right ? what shall I do ? what is my duty ? he evidently does not ask for a motive from which he must act—he has already the motive to act right so far as he puts the question with genuine sincerity ;—but he asks for the action which he is to do. The question presupposes that something is right besides the mere wish to do the right. The mere wish does not inform him what is right. If the man is really conscientious he will take the greatest pains to discover which out of many possible lines of conduct is the right one, and he will not believe that it makes no difference what he does. He will try to bring his moral sentiments and his acts into agreement with the highest moral standard he knows. If he does not do so and does not trouble himself to settle what is right, if he is not ready to test his own personal views, and change them as soon as he recognises that he is in error, he is not genuinely conscientious. It is entirely a mistake to try to make a radical difference between what are called mere questions of practical wisdom or utility on the one hand, and moral questions on the other—that would imply that practical wisdom and utility were always egoistical. In reality morals often demand the exercise of all our common sense in order to find out what is truly useful and right. It may often be hard to think closely on difficult questions, but whoever pretended that moral conduct is always an easy thing ? Whoever decides questions upon which the weal and woe, the life



and death of one or of many depend, without straining all the powers of his understanding, simply commits an immoral, and perhaps criminal, act. Nor does there exist any opposition between what is merely probable and what is moral; for morality orders us to follow the more probable when complete certainty is not attainable. The omission to do an act which would probably be beneficial to the community is also an act in the moral sense, and this omission is wrong if the doer believes that the doing of the deed is probably beneficial.

But although in answering the question whether a deed is right or wrong, a man is not to inquire into the motive for the same, but only to decide whether the thing purposed is or is not in accord with the general welfare, and whether in the circumstances of the case there was any reason to expect a predominance of evil effects, still the question as to the motive is of decisive significance when the moral character of the doer of the deed is the point at issue. Someone gives an alms to a strong young man who is begging in the street. How am I to judge of this act? Is it right or not? In order to decide I have only to find out whether it accords or not with the general welfare; but if I wish to pass judgment upon the character of the giver, I must know the motives which led him to the act.

No motive or impulse is in itself bad. The fundamental constitution of the human mind has developed by adaptation to the conditions of existence, and the individual impulses and emotions have functions to perform in the economy of life; therefore it would not be well to root out any one of these energies, even if it were possible. Even anger and hate are not in themselves degraded motives, because they are perfectly right, as no one can doubt, when directed against the bad and worthless. But although no human motive in itself is evil, although nothing is cast away by our moral consciousness, and nothing leads exclusively to deeds dangerous to the community, still impulses are by no means equal in respect to their effects, but a great difference prevails among them. While for example, from motives of benevolence, directed toward one individual person nine times out of ten, let us say, the

ensuing act will be for the general welfare ; from motives of personal malice, nine times out of ten, the act would be hostile to the interests of society. And for that very reason it is of great significance in judging of a man's character, to know from what motive he has acted. The constitution of the human mind shows in experience a certain regularity and uniformity, therefore we may infer from the appearance of a given motive, of given strength, in a certain case, that it will reappear in other cases. The circumstance that the labourer we have referred to wished by his wrong deed to prove himself grateful to his benefactor, allows us to infer that in former cases he has acted from motives of gratitude, and in the future will do the same again ; and the general effects of gratitude are highly beneficial ; therefore his act, wrong though it be, still justifies us in believing that the man cannot be wholly bad. The circumstance, on the other hand, that a man, "in order to be paid for his trouble," rescues a child of a rich neighbour from drowning, does not speak well for the goodness of his character ; it does not prove that in other cases, where his private interest would not be furthered, he would come to the rescue of others.

If we wish to attain a means which we could justify of estimating the relative value of motives, and establish the order of their gradation, we must not be satisfied with the simple appeal to feelings ; but must seek to determine the consequences of the deeds to which the motives generally lead a man, and must regard the effects of these consequences upon the general welfare as deciding the worth of the motives. If the matter be decided according to feeling, then one person will decide in one way, and another in another. Let us take sympathy for example. What is its relative worth ? The Athenian, Phocion, said that we must no more tear out sympathy from the breast of man, than the altar from the temple of the deity. But the Stoics, as well as Spinoza and Kant, are of the opposite opinion ; while Schopenhauer regarded sympathy as the only impulse which has moral worth. Or let us take the love of honour and fame ; how differently it has been estimated ! The Greeks were inclined to regard it as

the most worthy desire ; many Christians on the other hand have condemned it ; others have regarded it as at least foolish. Or take rational self-love ; Bishop Butler, who agreed with Kant in so many points, held it to be essentially co-ordinate in rank with conscience, and at least once seems to hint that it is the superior principle ; while Kant maintained that it was by no means a moral principle, but rather the opposite. It cannot be said that if we try to fix the relative worth of motives rationally by the consequences, we shall attain universal agreement : but at least so much seems certain that we shall approach much nearer to agreement than if we judge simply by the feelings.

The first place in a scale of motives belongs to the specifically moral motive or conscience, as was seen in our earlier investigation. It includes not only the direct impulse to do right, but also the wish to avoid pain and attain joy of conscience. Next follows the motive of benevolence, which is the more worthy the more comprehensive it is. In respect to the precedence of the other motives men's opinions differ ; only in one thing do all agree ; that the lowest motive in the scale is personal malice ; and many would assign the love of honour and the desire to live in quiet peace with one's neighbours to the place next to benevolence.

In assigning motives to an action, words are used which have either a good or a bad meaning attached, and therefore involve a judgment of approval or disapproval. For example the desire for pecuniary gain, if it leads to an unjust deed, is called avarice or miserliness, and love of honour is stamped as ambition. But these names are not justifiable as describing impulses, but only as epithets for the peculiarities of individual persons. If a man on account of a promised sum of money, (a motive from which many deeds useful to society spring) murders the enemy of some rich man, his motive is called horrible, criminal, and is designated avarice or cruelty ; but this is a mistake ; for his motive was only pecuniary interest, which is neither horrible nor criminal, but his purpose is criminal and a suitable object of horror, and his whole

character might well be described as cruel and avaricious. The circumstance that a man is led to commit murder for money not only shows that he is most sensitive to motives of pecuniary interest, but also that he is without conscience, and without human feeling ; and such a character is really an object of horror. And an inordinate love of gain may be ascribed to the man since it so far outweighs other motives, and he may also be called cruel because he is void of all humanity. Kind, amiable, worthy of respect, are terms applicable not to actions but to persons, and qualities of character ; we love, respect, and honour a man not on account of a deed but on account of qualities in his character which are the source of indefinitely many good deeds. These words are the expression of our moral judgment and feeling concerning deeds and qualities of character ; and it is of great importance, or rather, it is absolutely necessary that our moral judgments become current in that way in our conversation about deeds. To relate anecdotes of crime in an indifferent manner, or make them the object of jests, is nothing more or less than to bring about a demoralization of character, and to weaken the feeling of moral recoil which wicked deeds ought to stir up. It is a sign of the moral decay of a people when the tendency to apply fine terms to abominable things, and depreciating words to what is morally excellent, begins to prevail among them.

The expression "virtuous conduct" is properly figurative, it means conduct which proves the virtue of the doer. Moral conduct is such as has for its determining motive moral feelings or universal benevolence. An act may therefore be right, it may further the general welfare in a high degree, and this furtherance may also have been in the doer's purpose, without his act being a moral act. If the deed that brings forth happiness is done out of self-interest either in this world or the next, out of desire for fame, or love of wife, or out of sympathy, or out of any other motive than the moral feeling or the desire to further the general welfare, it is not a moral act. Indeed the act may not be right and still be moral ; this is the case when it springs from the sense of duty or universal

benevolence; and the mistake as to that which is right was unavoidable, when the man had done all he could to avoid error, when he had acted according to his best knowledge and conscience. We ascribe higher worth to such an act than to a right deed which springs from lower motives, for it alone has moral worth. Great misunderstanding arises from confusing the two questions, whether an act is right or whether the doer of the deed is moral.

But if any one should think that the objective judgment as to the deed, and the judgment as to the character of the doer, have nothing in common, it would be a mistake. For in both cases the highest principle for the rational valuation of worth is one and the same—the principle of universal happiness.

By this one principle we test at one time the general character of the man, at another his separate act. An inquisitor condemns a man to death who entertains religious convictions different from his own. In order to determine whether this act is right or not, it is not necessary to know out of what motives it has sprung; I have only to settle whether it is for the benefit of mankind to burn a man to death because of his religious convictions. The result of such an investigation is that such deeds are to be counted among the most evil forms of murder. They have deprived mankind of hundreds of thousands of its noblest, most truth-loving and gifted members, and have degraded intellectually and morally whole nations. Hence it follows that such deeds are in the highest degree wrong. But if I wish to form a judgment as to the character of the doer, I must make myself clear as to the motives which the man had. Let us assume the very improbable case that the religious inquisitor condemns a man to death, after the ripest deliberation, from a sense of duty and from universal benevolence; that he regards it as his duty to put this man, whose religious beliefs, he thinks, may deprive many of their eternal happiness, out of the way, and to make of him an example which shall deter others. He regards this as a necessary means for the salvation of mankind, and accordingly condemns the man to be burned, just as the law condemns to death a common

criminal. The sense of duty and universal benevolence are motives which almost always are highly beneficial. Let us suppose (although it is improbable), that the inquisitor was really moved by such motives, and that they were so strong as to overpower many opposing motives ; this would constrain us to infer that he was a philanthropic and conscientious man, who, as such, in countless cases would act for the public welfare ; his character therefore, on account of the general direction of its qualities, would deserve our respect. But his deed we cannot on that account cease to condemn.

He himself deserves no blame, for he had, according to our supposition, acted according to his best knowledge and conscience—the highest thing a man can do. We cannot blame him, and we ought not. For what was there in him to blame ? To blame in the moral sense means to give expression to our moral disapproval. The will of that man was the best, and no culpable negligence can be imputed to him. He had made every effort, according to our supposition, to find out what was right. It is true that had he been wiser, or possessed of greater strength of mind, or richer experience, he would have discovered the evil of his conduct. But he was not wiser, and our moral judgment does not relate to a man's understanding, but to the disposition of his will. Blame is not merely an attempt to frighten away from evil, but even if it were, could a man be blamed or frightened away who did what he held, after mature deliberation, to be right and beneficial to the community ? If a man does not use this standard, he will violate the interests of society incomparably oftener than if he does refer to it. Instead of blaming we have simply to enlighten him ; we have not to work upon his will but to clear up his ideas. The first and most essential condition of good conduct already exists in him, the good will ; and between to-day and to-morrow he may partake of the true knowledge which will help him to act henceforth with more benefit to his fellow-men than the average man acts.

The importance of the motives to action consists in our being able to infer from them the character of the doer. They are also

of great importance because of their effects on conduct ; for out of actual or supposed motives issue the results which are morally most essential, the influence of the deeds upon the morality of men. Every moral act works first a moralizing effect by strengthening in the doer himself the disposition toward such conduct. Further, it is an example that inspires to imitation, and provided that its inward character is known, makes similar conduct in the future easier for others. If the moral effect of an act seems not to correspond to the character of the motives, it is either because we have not pursued far enough their effects upon the moral disposition of men, or because we have presupposed other motives than those which were really at hand. In fact, it is one of the most evil consequences of a deed done from a mistaken sense of duty, that its motives often are not recognised, and its moral influence is not wholesome.

Our moral judgment does not, therefore, relate simply to what the doer proposes to do, but to the whole state of his emotions at the time of action ; and, if in a given case he does, from low motives, deeds which, in a well-ordered character, would have sprung from the highest—if, for example, he rescues someone from death in order to get money for it, or if he speaks the truth in order to have vengeance—we cannot approve his moral disposition. We must take care, not simply to regulate our conduct, but also our motives, thoughts and feelings ; not simply to do benevolent deeds, but to be benevolent ; not simply to do right, but also to do morally well. But from this it does not follow that all actions ought to come from a sense of duty or universal benevolence. All impulses and dispositions have a suitable sphere for activity ; in a human life there are many duties which will be better fulfilled if they spring from other motives than a sense of duty. This latter ought simply to be a controlling motive. We need not always act from conscience ; we must simply never act against it. The wish to act right need not always be present, but only the belief that we are acting right. Acts done from a sense of duty involve the belief that we are acting right ; but we may have the belief, and still act from other motives.

The act held to be right by the doer is sometimes called subjectively right, while it is called objectively right if it really agrees with the rule of right. For the doer himself, in the moment of action, there is naturally no difference between the subjective right and the objective right. Generally we understand by the morality of an act not only that it is subjectively right, but also that its impulse is the moral sentiment; by the legality is understood that it is only objectively right. Another expression for legality is the *material* goodness of an act, and sometimes morality is called the *formal* goodness; this latter expression, however, sometimes means simply that a thing is subjectively right.

The greatest caution naturally must be taken in concluding what the motives are, and what the character of the doer is. Often enough we can, in fact, infer with certainty in a given case what the motive is, and from that, together with the special circumstances of the case, we can draw justifiable conclusions as to the character of the doer; but in many cases this is quite impossible; and men often commit the grossest injustice when they presuppose evil motives without sufficient grounds. And even if a conclusion as to a certain side of a man's character is justified, still we must take care not to infer more than the case really implies. We must not judge all sides of a man's character from one side. Man is a very complicated being, and most various elements are found side by side in him.

If we are to judge of the character of historical personages from certain actions of theirs we must know the contemporary conditions of positive morality; conduct which we now regard as very wrong may at that time have been generally held as innocent or even commendable. If therefore at that time an individual person committed such a deed, it would show, let us suppose, that he agreed with the prevalent moral views of his race and times; it would prove nothing against his conscientiousness and the uprightness of his conduct. For example, suppose the public opinion of such people approved the torture of prisoners of war, then we could not infer anything as to the individual cruelty of a man who in this point acted according to public opinion.



We must carefully distinguish the moral from the æsthetic estimation of a character. Much that pleases æsthetically is morally indifferent; and much that is morally of high worth has little or no æsthetic value. Much confusion has been brought about by speaking of the identity of the good and the beautiful.

We have found that virtue is not the pure work of involuntary nature, but implies education and self-discipline. The germs of good are quickened and strengthened by the example and teaching of noble men. Every virtue can be acquired to a certain degree, because a persistent wish to possess it promotes corresponding deeds, and such exercise brings about a good habit, the disposition and quality of character; virtue is therefore a suitable object of praise as vice is of blame. To acquire a virtue, effort and self-constraint are often necessary; but in proportion as it is actually acquired the effort needed to practise the corresponding action becomes less; and when the virtue is perfect there is no more struggle. The surest means of becoming virtuous is to make the attainment of a satisfied moral consciousness the final aim of life.

Virtue is excellence of the will; it is the highest, because nothing so much as it secures the well-being of mankind. Its worth consists in action. It requires a certain, but not necessarily a high degree of the understanding. It may bear a different stamp in each person, as natural endowments and circumstances are different. The more the good qualities in a man's character outweigh the defects, so much the higher is his moral worth. A man's worth is known by the tests which he can stand successfully; the greater the temptation which he has outgrown, the higher is his desert;—moral desert is virtue that has been proved by trial.

To judge an act morally may mean two different things: to decide the question whether the act is right, or to settle what conclusion may be drawn from the act as to the character of the doer. If I wish to know whether an act is right I need not inquire as to its motives, but only as to the purpose; an act is not right if the thing purposed is injurious to the general well-being; it is good if the thing purposed is in accordance with the public

good and the doer has committed no culpable negligence, if he has taken the suitable precaution to make sure that the act shall not have an overweight of evil effects. But if we wish to pass judgment upon the moral worth of the doer, we must try to find out the motives of his action ; and the relative worth of motives is to be measured by the consequences of the deeds to which they generally lead. The moral motives proper have the highest worth, those of benevolence the next to the highest. The motives at the basis of an act have great importance on account of their effects ; in great part the moral influence of an act depends upon its real or supposed motives.

## CHAPTER VI.

### THE LAW OF CAUSE AND EFFECT.

“ Accident cannot by any jugglery transform men’s thoughts and deeds.”  
—SCHILLER.

#### (1.) *The Uniformity of Acts of the Will.*

THE moral life rests upon the presupposition that the law of cause and effect holds good just as much in the domain of human volition as in the material world—the law that no events take place without a cause, and none without effect. Causes are events which inevitably bring about certain others; these are called effects. The law of cause and effect therefore declares that all changes are preceded by others whose sequence they are, and that definite changes follow them without fail. If a certain event has brought about a definite change, we know, according to that law, that everywhere and always a similar event will bring about a similar change. The general fact that all natural events have causes and effects is called their uniformity. The law of cause and effect is the basis of all inference in respect to present, past, and future events; if it did not hold good our knowledge would be limited to our momentary sensations. The knowledge of causes is therefore of an importance transcending everything else; upon it rests our power over things, yes, our very existence; the need of knowing the causes of events is accordingly found in the impulse to self-preservation.

All changes have causes, and these causes in turn are caused, the chain of causes and effects is endless. We are not justified in the supposition that the play of changes began at a certain time, but we must regard it as an essential attribute in the constitution of the world. If anyone should declare that the play of

changes had a beginning we should be obliged to ask him what the cause of this change was ; why it took place at that moment, and not a million years before ? What justifies us in the assumption that whatever has once happened under definite conditions, will always happen again under the same conditions ? We have a physical and a logical reason for it. So far as scientific observation has extended it has met uniformity in natural events ; and out of the experience of the past—the past which itself was once a future—we infer what in the future is to be observed. Things have definite characteristics, they are something and not nothing, and according to these characteristics they effect other things, and receive effects from others ; they produce effects according to what they are, and not according to what they are not. At bottom I can say nothing of things in general, or of their existence, except to state their effects. When I speak of a definite thing, I mean a thing which brings about definite effects, and stands in definite relations to other things. Therefore when I say that a definite thing, so long as it remains unchanged—so long as it is this definite thing—will always, under the same circumstances, act in the same way, I say nothing more than that this definite thing, so long as it remains unchanged, will be this definite thing. It may be difficult, or even impossible, to settle whether a thing is changed or not ; but if it is not changed, it must always, under the same circumstances, act as it has acted heretofore. As the law of cause and effect holds good in the inanimate and animal world, so also does it have validity in the human world. To meditate upon human conduct is to infer its uniformity, to deny uniformity is really to cease to think ; for thinking means inferring like from like ; as every being in every moment is entirely definite, so also is every man, he has definite characteristics according to which he acts, and if these remain unchanged, his conduct, under the same external circumstances, will remain unchanged ; for if it changed the man would then act according to that which he was not.

For man is born with a definite mental equipment just as with a definite bodily constitution ; he does not come into the world

as a nothing but as a something. A being which is not wholly a definite being is not real, but only a word. A man has at his birth definite capacities which constitute the reason why everything cannot be developed out of him. If we should bring up in entirely the same way a young German, a young Gipsy, and a young Zulu, they would nevertheless develop quite differently. All three are men, they would therefore have much in common; but they belong to different races and would therefore manifest striking differences. A human being does not come into the world as man in general, but as a boy or a girl, as a member of this or that race, of this or that tribe, of this or that family; and his ancestry is of the greatest significance, even as regards his intellect for the whole of his life. To what is born in the man must be added the influence of all outward circumstances which act upon him from his birth. "Not alone that which is born," said Goethe, "but also that which is acquired constitutes the man." Every moment he is exposed to definite external forces, which exercise upon him according to his definite constitution a definite influence. The influence of his whole education, of his association, the moulding forces of the society to which he belongs, make themselves felt; all his experiences in general contribute to the development of his understanding, his feelings, and his will. "The first hour of his instruction," says Pestalozzi, "is the first hour of his birth." During the first years of his life all these circumstances exercise a very great influence upon his mental development; with advancing years this influence is less considerable, but never ceases entirely. Apparently insignificant events bring about extraordinary consequences. Upon what petty circumstances does it sometimes depend whether we make this or that acquaintance. And how decisive for our whole life—and perhaps for that of many others, may become the comradeship of one man!

To the complete unfolding of our special talents definite outward circumstances are requisite. If William Lloyd Garrison had lived in a land in which there were no slavery he could not have revealed the characteristics of a freer of slaves. If a country lives

continually at peace, the talents of military generalship cannot be developed in it. Nor the gift of diplomacy if there are no political difficulties. If Newton or Mozart had grown up among the Fire-Islanders they would not have produced the "Principles" or "Don Juan." External circumstances which from birth exercise an influence upon the human mind may act either in the direction of native capacities or in some other direction; therefore although two men may have the same natural equipment, they might still develop differently if they were exposed to different external forces. What we are born with is not something fixed and unchangeable once for all. A man, for example, with an average mental capacity cannot by any, however careful, education, be made a genius, and still, perhaps, he may become distinguished and render excellent service in the sciences. John Stuart Mill in his Autobiography declares that his natural talents were below rather than above the average. If, on the contrary, a man of average endowment is neglected in his education, and if every external circumstance also works against him, his intelligence will always remain of a low order. A child with a good disposition, if its education falls into the hands of hard-hearted, vicious, and cruel men, will develop otherwise than if it is always treated with affection. The same holds good in every respect; natural endowment and education must both be recognised, and we dare not count either the one or the other as everything.

In the innate talents, and in all the external forces which make themselves felt from birth, the character of the developed man finds its complete explanation; the history of a man is his character, if we include under his history what he has inherited from his ancestors; and he acts according to his character. It is true a man is not at all times equally disposed to this or to that; if he is well, he conducts himself otherwise than if he is ill,—if all his energies are fresh, otherwise than if he is exhausted,—if he is in a glad mood, otherwise than if he is in sorrow. But in any case a man has at every moment an entirely definite constitution, which is not something accidental, but has its cause in preceding events; and according to his constitution at the time—which in a high

degree is independent of the external circumstances in the midst of which he finds himself—the man acts. And in proportion as we know his constitution we are enabled to see beforehand how he will act under given external circumstances. In fact our knowledge of a given man is often at least so far exact that we may judge with perfect correctness beforehand in respect to certain classes of his acts. We are, for example, in respect to a man whom we know to be really upright, certain that no amount of money, however great, even if he could take it with no danger of being found out, could induce him to steal; and we are willing to stand by this conviction just as we trust our knowledge of the effects of some well-known material substance. And if for once our expectation is disappointed, we do not say that his character has suddenly and by accident been transformed into its opposite; but that we had had an inadequate knowledge of the external circumstances which were influencing him, or that we had attributed to him a different character from that which he really had. Many mental phenomena, especially many actions, can in fact be predicted with greater certainty than many events in the material world.

Two groups of facts, therefore, we may always distinguish if we consider a definite act: the constitution, at the moment, of the person who acts, and that of the external circumstances. If we note what both are exactly, we can predict the act with certainty. But if an essential change takes place in the line of these inward and outward conditions, the man's conduct will be changed. With risk of his life a man rescues a drowning person; through many circumstances this act might perhaps have been prevented. It would perhaps not have happened if the man had felt exhausted or had had headache, or if his sympathy had been a little weaker, or the thought of his own danger a little more vivid, or if his care for his own family had been more conscientious, or if it had been darker, so that he could not have seen so distinctly the despairing struggle with death, or if the bank of the river had been steeper. Every one of these different circumstances might, perhaps, have prevented the deed. But if one of them had taken

place, this, in its turn, would have had an adequate cause, and the whole course of the world beforehand must have been different—that is to say, the world itself would have been different.

The circumstances which affect human conduct may be divided from one point of view into such as are peculiar to the individual man, as his special bodily constitution, his temperament, his personal character, his profession, his association, and so on ; and into such as exercise their influence upon the whole country, as the state of the laws, of the politics, of public education, the prevalent moral views, economical relations, the conditions of peace or war, and so on. The circumstances peculiar to the individual person have naturally a far greater influence upon his conduct than those which also affect his fellow citizens. But one man has this physical constitution, another that, one this character, another that, one this occupation, another that ; and it is therefore to be expected that if we should observe in their totality the modes of conduct which prevail in any given country, and should determine the number of deeds of a given kind, we should find approximately the same number in the same lengths of time, provided these be not too short, and provided that the general relations of the country be not essentially changed. With a sufficiently extended field of observation, in other words, with a sufficiently great number of cases before us, this may be assumed ; because that number in part is the result of social, in part the result of individual causes, and the former, as is presupposed, have not changed, but the latter, as they run off in most various directions and combine very differently, cannot essentially change the total result. If, on the other hand, the circumstances which influence the whole country change essentially, the number of cases would also change essentially and indeed in proportion as the modified circumstances are more powerful in affecting the motives of action.

The truth that the law of cause and effect holds good in the domain of human conduct, has been strikingly presented to us in recent years by political and social statistics. These have shown that the frequency of the appearance of different kinds



of human conduct manifests no less uniformity than physiological phenomena. The number of deaths in general in a given country, as well as of deaths by accident, is often subject to greater fluctuations than the number of suicides. We may, as Morselli remarks, predict for any given country, with greater probability, not only the number of suicides in general to be expected in the next year, but also the number of cases in each season; and indeed, the average relations continue so constant that in the statistical tables of suicides they always are repeated; likewise, in respect to the numbers of the means chosen for suicide, water, rope, pistol, poison, and the like, a striking uniformity exists. And in corresponding manner the same statement holds as to all other phenomena which statistics have gathered with sufficient exactness. No fate hangs over people to make up a given number of important acts to accord with the budget of the scaffold and the galley; the number of acts remaining almost the same is simply a testimony to the effect that the condition of society in the length of time examined has not changed essentially. If a striking variation shows itself in the numbers, we immediately inquire as to the cause of it; and we then are convinced that it has been brought about by a change in some of the circumstances which affect society. With every radical change of social relations—which, as such, modify considerably the totality of the motives acting in the society—the numbers also of classes of acts change radically, and never do the numbers agree perfectly.

(2.) *Uniformity and Freedom.*

If the law of cause and effect held good in human conduct, then, some have declared, there would be no freedom; but therein they affirm the exact opposite of the truth.

Freedom is a word with many significations; let us examine these. In the most general sense, it signifies the absence of hindrances and obstacles, especially the absence of everything which narrows the sphere of the will. It is properly a negative expression, and has a different sense according to the constitution

of the hindrance which is denied. "I am free from duties, free from pain, from care," means: I have no duties, no pain, no cares. "A dog runs about freely," means: he is not fastened to a chain, or led about by a cord, but can run about as he wills. Some one is "as free as a bird in the air, or a fish in the water," means: that person's inclinations are as little constrained as a bird's or fish's. A man is free when he can do what he wishes. The opposite of freedom is constraint. Anything is a constraint when it is against one's own inclination, when it opposes the will.

It is evident that freedom in this sense of the word—physical freedom, as we call it—is not something incompatible with the law of cause and effect. Acts of the will are not accidental, but are phenomena which are caused and uniform. Our deeds lie in our power. We can do what we will, and we will according to the given conditions of volition, on the return of which we would will to do exactly the same. Our consciousness of freedom is simply the consciousness that we have a will, and that our doing or leaving undone depends upon our will. The existence of the will and its actuality do not imply freedom from law. If the law of cause and effect had no application to our willing and doing, then in fact we should not be free, we could no longer do what we willed. We could not at all say *our* will, for the separate volitions would be uncaused, accidental events; they would have no root in our being; and they would also bring about no uniform results, but would be without power. Those who say that by the freedom of the will is understood the independence of the will, independence of all circumstances which preceded the volition, should stop and think that an act independent of all its preceding inward circumstances is nothing else than an act independent of us, an act which is not our act.

The French National Convention defined political freedom in this way: "Freedom is the power belonging to each man to do whatever does not infringe upon the rights of others. Its principle is reason; its rule, justice; its guardian, the law; the moral limitation lies in the precept: What you do not wish that others do to you, neither do you to others." A nation is politically free

when it is governed according to its own will, when the laws which it obeys are the expression of the common will ; and as in the conception of this universal political freedom, so also in that of particular kinds of freedom, such as the liberty of industry, of association, of meetings, of the press, of conscience ; the fundamental condition of being free is always to be able to do what one wills to do. It is clear that the same holds good of political as of physical freedom : it implies, as a presupposition, the law of cause and effect.

*Locke's view*

When we speak of a free will, which is proper to men, but not to animals, we mean independence of the impressions of the moment ; of that which is immediately present before the eyes ; a capacity to be guided by thoughts which are directed toward the future, or the whole of life, or toward duty. This intellectual freedom, as we shall call it, the power of abstract motives as over against momentary impulses and passions, we may designate as self-control. In consequence of inexact observation persons sometimes regard the efficiency of abstract motives as exclusively a rational activity, and define self-control as strength of reason, as over against passion. But "when we speak of the struggle of reason with passion," Hoeffding very correctly says, "we really mean a struggle between feelings connected with rational considerations, and the violent feelings which have very few elements of thought bound up in them, and which we designate by the expression, passion. The feeling may be very strong and deep without being violent, but often it may be easily overlooked." As physical freedom consists in being able to act as a man wishes, so we may say intellectual freedom consists in being able to act as the *whole* man wishes. Thus Rousseau says : The freedom of a man consists "in never doing what he does not wish." Intellectual freedom is not a characteristic peculiar to every one in the same degree, but it is a virtue which men possess in very different degrees ; it is the task of every one to acquire this freedom as much as possible. It is the greater in proportion to the regularity with which a man lets himself be guided by the thought of what is better.

*Properly speaking, this cannot be said to be a virtue, but a habit.*

This capacity puts a man into a position to deliberate. Let us here examine more closely the action of mind which we call "deliberation." It often happens that several motives driving us in opposite directions are held in balance, and then we say we are undecided. As long as this balance lasts no act of the will follows. This condition, as it allows us to come to no outward act, never lasts long, because the flood of thought soon brings about new motives which relate to the affair in hand and add their weight to the one side or the other, and thus lead to an action; or the new motives relate to another kind of activity, and to this the will is now turned, while it lets that affair in respect to which there was indecision, rest for a time. As the new motives coming in put an end to the state of indecision, they often lead to the overturning of a decision already attained, which for some reason or other has not yet brought about the corresponding act. But if this has already happened the new motives cause us to regret it, and this feeling of repentance may become very strong if the thoughts which now come too late, concern things of great importance. This painful experience which everyone in his life finds opportunity of having—namely, that a decision hastily made, and acted on according to the first impulse of the motive after merely superficial consideration, may have evil consequences—leads to deliberation. Care to avoid the consequences of a too hasty decision constitutes a motive against instantaneous action, a motive which is the stronger the more the consequences may injure the interests of one's self or of others whose welfare one has at heart. If this new motive is stronger than the force of the motives which drive us to instantaneous action, the deed remains for the time undone, and there arises a deliberate search for motives for and against the act in question; and this mental occupation which is made possible, and at the same time excited by the motive that holds us back for a moment, we call deliberation. It is continued as long as the apprehension of danger from overhasty decision lasts; the effect of this motive is that the side, which in other particulars for the time is the strongest, does not produce instantaneous action, and as soon as that apprehension

vanishes—inasmuch as the desire to have as many motives as possible for and against an act is satisfied, and no new thoughts touching it present themselves to consciousness—the act takes place according to the total result of all the motives present. Over against the mistake of too hasty action stands that of too long suspension: the care to avoid the possibly bad results of hasty decision may be so great that it holds us back from action, even when longer hesitation is disadvantageous, and this new experience of the possibly evil consequence of too long postponements acts as a counter motive against such conduct. Wisdom consists in making quickly an estimate as to the amount of time we have, and in deliberating as much as is required in order to bring to mind all the essential motives which might come up, and in acting at the end of this time according to the consideration which just then seems most weighty. There is nothing lawless in this process; it does not happen without cause that a man begins to deliberate, and no thought, no feeling, which then makes itself felt, is an accidental phenomenon, but is based upon a man's previous experience and peculiar constitution. If anyone says that the law of cause and effect does not apply in these matters, he puts in question the value of deliberation, inasmuch as he denies that action may be determined by deliberation; if it is not so determined, then there would be no such thing as deliberate conduct. In the statement that deliberations are subject to the uniformity of nature, there is no implication that a man is under the control of his sensuous impulses, or that abstract processes of thought are valueless. Who would wish to deny the power of ideas? They are the chief source of the moral life of mankind! But to understand the power of thoughts does not mean to abandon one's belief in the universal validity of the law of cause and effect, but rather to recognise the manner of its activity in the human world.

The man who can deliberate has more power than he who is torn away by the demands of passion. Sometimes life and death depend upon the capacity to deliberate. Understanding, insight, prevision, have helped men to subdue outward nature, and

control their own mental life. The question of the Stoics as to what is in our power and what is not in our power, that is, as to what we may bring about if we wish and what we may not, is of the greatest importance. Not only outward events but also the course of our ideas and feelings, and our disposition toward future acts, our character, are all to a great degree in our power. But if volition were not subject to the law of cause and effect—if it were independent of preceding thoughts and inclinations—nothing would be in our power, we should be absolutely helpless; our volition would not be brought about by ourselves; for thoughts, feelings, inclinations, which precede the act of the will, constitute our very selves.

By moral freedom sometimes is understood the strength of those thoughts which concern what is right and good. In this sense a man is morally free when his motives of duty outweigh others and he is true to the rules of duty, notwithstanding the temptations from other sides of his nature. St. Augustine says: "The will is then truly free when it does not serve vices and sins." And Salter says: "All morality is in one sense a limitation of freedom. True freedom consists not in following our impulses, but in subjecting them to the thought of the best." Likewise Matthias Claudius says: "He is not free who can do what he wills, but he is free who can will what he ought." In the same sense the Stoics called the virtuous man alone free, the vicious man a slave. But it is evident that when slavery is spoken of here, it is a figurative mode of speech, which only means to say that it would be better for a man to follow rational self-love or conscience. The passions are not powers which overcome a man but are a part of himself, his own energies as much as his reason or his conscience, although their effect is often injurious. Sometimes by moral freedom is meant the circumstance that a man in his moral judgments is independent of others, that he is morally self-determining, that he tests for himself the worth of action by a standard of right, that he is his own moral law-giver. Thus Kant says: "Freedom and the self-legislation of the will are both autonomy, therefore interchangeable conceptions." It is clear that

the law of cause and effect is as little in conflict with mental and moral freedom as with physical and political.

But perhaps some one will say : if the law of cause and effect controls human conduct, is not conduct then necessitated—and how can it in that case be called free ? Now the word law, as we remarked before, is used in a figurative sense when applied to the uniformity of natural processes. Natural laws are the ways things happen in nature ; but these laws are not precepts which nature obeys, we construct them in order to express in a proposition the uniformity of facts. The natural law is, therefore, only the expression for a general fact, and it is not something out of and above the fact ; things are not arranged according to laws, but laws according to things. Things act according to their own nature. Such expressions as the supremacy or the power of laws in nature are simply figurative phrases to indicate that in the course of nature uniformity and regularity prevail. And the most universal of all natural laws, that of cause and effect, is simply the formula of the fact that all changes have causes and effects. Therefore when we declare that human conduct is under the law of cause and effect, we do not say that something swaying its sceptre above man forces him and makes his actions necessary ; we simply affirm that his deeds are not accidental and meaningless phenomena, but have causes and effects. The causes of his conduct lie in himself, he acts according to his nature.

What does the word “ necessary ” signify in its application to the events of nature ? What does a man mean when he says : “ Dry powder must explode if it comes into touch with flame ? ” Is the “ must ” or the “ necessary ” something in the things ? Is the powder forced under certain circumstances to explode ? By no means ; the powder does this quite freely ; it is its proper nature to conduct itself thus. The necessity points to a condition, not of the things and processes, but of the understanding which conceives of them. To be necessary means to follow from a sufficient reason. To say that it is necessary is equivalent to saying that its being as it is, is a logical sequence from something else which we know. To say that it is impossible is the same as saying that

its not being follows from some reason. "This and this must be so!" Whoever makes such a statement has a ground on which he bases it. "It must be so, for this and this are so and so." But the grounds are knowledge, are the premises in a syllogism, the conclusion of which is the thing to be established. Necessity always expresses some force; but in this case not the things but the understanding which thinks about them suffers the constraint: it is compelled to recognise the conclusion if its premises are given. But the things and processes either are or they are not; and if I call them necessary I only make a statement concerning my knowledge about them; the necessity lies not in the object, but in the subject. If I say: "this rolling ball will necessarily hit that point, it must do so, it is impossible that it should not," or if I say: "In the moon there can be no organic life," I only affirm that I definitely know this, that it follows from certain information which I possess concerning these things. If anyone reports a low act concerning a man whom I am intimately acquainted with and whose character I honour, I say without further concern, "that is impossible;" and I mean that I have sufficient grounds for the fixed conviction that he has not done the act. I do not mean that he is incapable of doing it even if he had wished it; but that I know him to be such a man as would never have such a wish. "The impossible," therefore, expresses here not a physical hindrance—as if he had been bound and so could not do the deed—but the highest degree of conviction, the absence of all doubt, that he would not do the deed. "Impossible," does not designate something in the things, but only a condition of the thinking mind, so also with its contraries, the "accidental" and "the possible." It is possible that so and so still lives, that there are animals on the planet Venus, that it will rain to-morrow, that so and so will do this and this; these mean: I do not know, I have no ground for believing the contrary. Objectively it is not "possible" that there is animal life on that planet; but it either exists there or does not. Accidental signifies, in an absolute sense, to be without a cause; in this sense no change in nature is accidental. But often the



word only means: not intended. "It was an unfortunate accident that a ball hit him as he was walking in the neighbourhood of the shooting-ground," means: Neither on the side of the one shooting, nor on the side of the injured man was there any intention of bringing about the result. The coming together of two lines of events we often call accidental if they in no wise are in causal connection with each other, although we do not thereby deny that each line of events had its own special cause. We call it an accident if a brick falling from a roof hits a ball that is being rolled along by the wind. But frequently an accident signifies nothing further than our ignorance; as when we say: "It would be an accident if the sovereign which I toss up into the air comes down head or tails."

The scientifically educated man does not believe that there exists absolute accident or uncaused will anywhere; he does not doubt that even those processes in which apparently the greatest irregularity prevails, as in the play of the wind and weather, take place according to severe laws; and all scientific investigation rests upon this supposition, which it confirms by experience in ever widening circles of nature. It is certain that all changes in nature are under laws, and that if we should exactly know all these we could predict all changes with certainty—as already the astronomer's knowledge of the way in which the heavenly bodies move enables him to predict eclipses of the sun and moon. And although such predictions in respect to other departments of nature are not yet possible, we do not believe that this is to be attributed to any irregularity in the processes themselves, but that we do not know the laws of this department of reality. And likewise, we do not doubt that the actions of animal and human beings are capable of being predicted, and that the difficulty or impossibility of doing so is not due to any lawless element in the will, but to the great number and complication of the determining grounds, and the difficulty of getting at these. If a being had the power to will otherwise than its characteristics prompted, the exercise of this power, as Collins said, would thwart the activity of the senses, feelings, impulses and understanding which

conduce to its self-preservation; and there could be no science of the mind, no psychology and none of the sciences which presuppose these, like ethics or pedagogy, if the changes of consciousness were not subject to the law of uniformity.

Much confusion often arises by not noticing the double significance of the words, necessary, impossible, possible, able, unable, capable, and others, and by interpreting these in their physical instead of their logical sense. If I say: "It is possible even for the best man to do the worst deed—he can do it;" and if I say: "It is impossible for a good man to do a bad deed—he cannot do it," I say the words "impossible" and "can" in two very different senses—I designate two quite different conceptions by a single word. The first sentence is the same as saying: "Even the best man can, if he will, do the worst deed;" the second means: "The good man never has the will." It follows from his nature that he does not have it; it would be a contradiction to say that he has it. Priestley affirms: "The greatest difficulties in the consideration of the subject of liberty and necessity have arisen from obscurity in the use of terms."

Some opponents of the doctrine of uniformity in acts of the human will have said, they did not mean that human actions happened without cause, but only that the causes did not necessitate the acts. But what does "not necessitate" mean here? Does it mean that a definite cause does not unfailingly bring about a definite effect, but that at one time this effect, at another time that, follows? But then that event was not a cause; for a cause is an event which is followed by another definite event without fail; if this latter does not depend upon the former, if it happens or not although the former is present, they do not stand related to one another as cause and effect. Or do the words, "not necessitated," mean that if all the internal and external circumstances preceding an act were known, our thought would still not be necessitated to expect a definite act? Then the words declare something that is false. Or do they mean that a man is not forced in his actions? This would be quite right; a man generally can do what he wills, he can speak or keep silent if he

will, can remain sitting or stand if he will (provided he is not lame), but this does not imply that his definite volition is without a cause. Attempts to take the middle ground between affirming and denying that everything is caused, are perhaps very well meant, but they are illogical.

"But if our conduct is determined by motives," some one has objected, "then it is not we who act but our motives; a man ought not to let himself be determined, he ought to determine himself." This objection presents the relationship as if a man (from the mental side of his nature), his soul, his personality, his inner self, the ego, were one definite thing, and his thoughts, feelings and passions, were something else, external and foreign. It represents these latter as acting upon another being, the ego, instead of acting themselves, or refusing to act. But my thoughts, feelings, and disposition are not separate beings but parts of me, of my consciousness, of myself; they constitute me as a mental being; to be self-determining and to be determined by one's own thoughts and feelings are therefore only two expressions for one and the same thing. An act without thoughts and feelings would in truth be nothing of which we could have reason to be proud. What has principally betrayed people into regarding motives as something external to one's self is partly the figurative speech by which inner processes are often described—the names given them originally are all taken from physical things and phenomena; and partly it is the confusion of thoughts and feelings with the outward things and events which call them forth in us. Whoever admits that acts without exception follow their special motives, and yet declares that these do not determine the action but are only the occasion upon which we determine ourselves, quarrels about mere words.

"A man should not allow himself to be determined by motives, he should be self-determining!" But what then is the Self? If it is not a motive, then it is not a feeling of duty, it is not the insight that something is for the best, it is neither desire nor recoil, neither love nor hate, neither hope nor fear, it is neither a feeling nor a thought; it is therefore, as would appear,

nothing. To be self-determined means accordingly to be determined by nothing, to decide from pure arbitrariness. If we think away from a man all special thoughts, feelings, impulses, and all states of consciousness in general, no self remains; we have left only a man in the deepest sleep, a mere vegetable creature, not a self-conscious being. "Must we then have everything doubled?" This question of Lichtenberg's is in place here. The mythological way of thinking saw a soul in everything, a ghostly, shadowy being flitting about, which perhaps by burning the thing could be forced to leave it; therefore, at the grave of their dead, men burned the favourite dogs, weapons, and implements of the departed one, in order that the souls of these things might follow the man's soul into the spirit world; likewise does the mythological way of thinking imagine behind the acts of the will a mysterious mental being, a thing which is equipped with the power, in a quite incomprehensible way, to bring out of the infinity of sleeping energies certain ones into activity. But still some one may object that men always say a man is overcome by his passions, whose slave he is; or, that he is master over them; while one does not say that his passions are overcome by other motives. But this entire way of speaking, as we said before, is figurative. The metaphor arises from a judgment already formed as to action, and rests upon the opposition between duty, the knowledge of the best, the thought of the future and the lasting interests of man, on the one hand, and, on the other, the attraction of the moment, the transitory impulse; and we identify the man with the more worthy class of motives, with his "true" or "better self."

### (3.) *Uniformity and Choice.*

It has been said that man possesses the power of choosing between different motives, especially between moral and not moral, between right and wrong, or between the demands of reason and the impulses of the animal nature or passions, and of giving the preference without being under irresistible necessity; it is said that he has freedom of choice. What does choice

signify here? What does a man mean when he says: I can choose between right and wrong? A man cannot at all choose between right and wrong in the abstract, but only between definite right and wrong actions. Let us take an example. A preacher gradually comes to the conviction that the chief doctrines of his church are untenable; if he wishes to remain longer in his office he must become a hypocrite; he knows that it would not be right to remain, but he has a wife and child and no income; he knows that if he gives up his position both he and his family must suffer, perhaps for a long time. What now would it mean to say here, "he can choose, he has freedom of choice?" Does it mean that he can remain or give up his position if he wills? Or that he is at the time of decision in possession of full self-consciousness, of perfect clearness of mind, is not ill, nor in passionate excitement? Or does it mean that he has sufficient time for deliberation, and is not hindered from acting according to the results of deliberation? It is evident that in no one of these cases is freedom of choice in contradiction to the law of uniformity. "A man can give the preference either to moral or not moral motives without being under irresistible necessity." What this sentence means is not clear. The preacher does not choose between different motives, but between different actions, and the deliberation and feelings which determine him we know as motives, and the final result of the force of these we call the act of the will; the activity which does not proceed from motives we should not call an act. Thus we only come back to the old simple truths that a man can do what he will and is not subject to any force. In the foregoing case what decides the preference? Does nothing do so? By no means; one or the other motive decides. The preacher gives up his office because the sense of duty determines, because the thought of doing his duty is stronger in him than that of a comfortable life for himself and family. But it has been said, a man does not choose if he chooses necessarily; now, if necessary is not here understood in the sense of force—in which case the expression "necessary choice" is self-contradictory—the statement, as Hobbes declared,

is as foolish as if one should say that fire does not burn if it burns necessarily.

But perhaps some one will say we know that we are capable of doing exactly the opposite deed, and if in a given case we have acted in a definite way, we might also have acted otherwise. By this is generally meant that we could do the one deed if we should will it, and that we also could do quite a different deed if we should will so, and that we could also, in the past, have done otherwise had we willed to. What is meant therefore is simply physical freedom. The preacher can sit down and write out a form of resignation to the authorities who are over him, and can send this (if he will); and, if he will, he can also refrain from sending and let the whole matter drop. I have driven along a certain street in a carriage, but I might have gone on foot (if I had willed to do so); but I was not able to use a bicycle (even if I had willed to). If "to be able" be understood in the physical instead of the logical sense of the word, then I could not do otherwise than as really happened. The act would not have taken place if it had been hindered; and perhaps the slightest new circumstance might have had sufficient influence to prevent it, but it was not prevented. The act happened, and then all the requisite conditions of its taking place were at hand; or else it did not happen, and then the conditions were not at hand, it therefore could not happen. A man acts in every moment according to his constitution at the time; and this is always definite, and cannot be at the same time the opposite of what it is. If anyone believed that he knew the character of the preacher, whose case we have supposed, and was perfectly convinced that he was an upright sincere man, he would not hold it for possible that the preacher would remain in his position.

If in a given case I have kept silent, my condition, at that time, under those circumstances, brought the silence with it; the will to be silent is not something accidental but founded in my constitution. If some other definite thought had come into my mind perhaps I should have spoken. If my feelings at the time had been slightly different, I might have conducted myself differently;

but they were not different. What thoughts and feelings however do make themselves felt is not without cause, but the consequence of the faculties and experience of the person. Even in the wildest play of fancy there reigns no absolute accident ; the circle of ideas varies according to the person's nature, and therefore their fancies are very different : a boy's day-dreams are different from a girl's, a German's from a New Zealander's, a peasant's from an artist's. What has often induced men to believe that under given circumstances another act of the will might have come forth, is the circumstance that often very different wishes precede an act, while only one or a few of these lead to the act ; men often think then that they might have acted otherwise. But the motives present have in each man a quite definite strength and an exact relationship to one another in degree ; the one that is strongest, or the several that are strongest determine the act. In case we regard wishes as phenomena of the will, then we have simply to say that a man does that which he most wills.

A favourite argument of those who deny such a thing as arbitrary accident—says one who believes in it—is this : that if the theory of such accident is tenable, “a man's murderer may as probably be his best friend as his worst enemy, a mother as likely to strangle as to suckle her first-born, and all of us as ready to jump from fourth storey windows as to go out of the door, etc. Users of this argument should probably be excluded from debate till they learn what the real question is.” The statement that a man possesses such a power, says this defender of indeterminism, “does not mean that everything that is physically conceivable is also morally possible, it merely says that of alternatives that really tempt our will, more than one is possible. Of course the alternatives that really tempt our will are vastly fewer than the physical possibilities we can fancy. Persons really tempted often do murder their best friend, mothers do strangle their first-born, people do jump out of fourth storey windows, etc. . .” Now let us consider this last example. Let us suppose a man, whom an unfortunate love affair has brought to desperation, decides to put an end to his misery by voluntary death, and hurls himself out of a fourth storey window ;

his mangled body is taken up, and the skill of physicians succeeds in saving his life. Before he decided upon suicide, his will was actually tempted by various alternatives ; he had still a strong love of life, the thought of self-destruction was frightful ; also frightful was the idea of living longer, and the thought to be able to make an end of all his misery immediately, was sweet to him. And after he decided upon suicide, he vacillated whether he should shoot himself, or poison himself, or leap from a window. Now what does it mean to say that another alternative than the one actually chosen was actually possible ? Let the man reflect upon that deed of despair which now we may suppose he repents of. Does his self-consciousness tell him that he could have acted otherwise ? It tells him nothing of the kind ; only concerning states of consciousness at the moment actually at hand can it declare anything. And also his memory can say nothing ; it can only inform him about what actually happened, not about what might possibly have happened instead. Neither self-consciousness nor memory, only the understanding can declare anything as to the merely possible. If, therefore, the man now says : "it was possible for me to act otherwise," he can only mean : "I could have acted otherwise if I had willed otherwise." But if he asks himself : "Could I at that time also have willed otherwise ?" what does his understanding then reply ? Perhaps this : "I should not have done that deed if I had felt concerning it as I do now ; but I did not feel so. I should not have done it if the thought that time would heal my wound had been vividly present to me ; but it was not. I should not have done it if I had regarded suicide as absolutely unworthy ; but I did not so regard it. I should not have leaped from the window, but have used a pistol, if I had not regarded the former act to be the surest way of securing death ; but I did regard it as the surest. That I at that time chose death and not life is a proof that I preferred death, that is, that the motive which determined me to kill myself was stronger than the love of life ; and to say that I could have chosen life, although I preferred death, is self-contradictory. I know that, if all the conditions of that act could be repeated, I should act in exactly



the same way ; but they cannot be repeated, for even if I should be placed again in the same outward situation, my sentiments are not any longer the same, other thoughts and feelings would come up." Let us suppose that the act has not yet happened, but is only an object of contemplation and wish. What, now, would it mean to say that not only the choice of death but also that of life is in reality possible? Perhaps it would only mean again that the one or the other line of action depends wholly upon the will of the doer. Perhaps it may also mean that I do not know, or that the person under temptation does not himself know, which act will take place ; there is no ground at hand for expecting the one or the other with certainty. But if it is intended to mean that the deed will be a pure accident, that it will not have any cause, if death instead of life be chosen, the healthy normal mind protests against such a statement.

If I say I choose between various possible courses of conduct, of which one is right, I must necessarily mean, so opponents of our theory declare, that I can choose the right course no matter how strong opposite impulses may be, or how often I may have yielded to temptation ; the difficulty of an act and the impossibility of it, are radically different conceptions. But even here what is really meant seems to be only physical freedom. If I believe that an act is my duty, that I ought to do it, that it would be wrong to leave it undone, I certainly mean that it is an act which I can do if I will ; if I am physically incapacitated I do not regard it as my duty to go to the rescue of a drowning man, for I cannot do it even if I willed to. "Strong contrary impulses against an act and an opposing habit, make it indeed difficult, but not impossible." This is of course true ; a man will be able to do a deed irrespective of all contrary motives, if he wills to do it ; we do not name it impossible, if the man can do it ; and the man does not say that he cannot do it, if it depends upon his will. And also the saying that a man cannot carry out a certain act of the will is not appropriate, inasmuch as it lets it appear as if he could not do the act even if he willed it ; while in this case the willing itself is the being able—the very thing in ques-

tion. Not to be able to will, although a man wills, is simply a contradiction. But will he will to do a right act, if the motives not to do it are stronger than those to do it? "If the motive to do right," it has been said, "is too weak in me, still I cannot regard this fact in rational deliberation as a rational ground for not doing the right." Certainly not, it is by no means a rational ground for not doing right—and there can in general be no such ground, but it is, unhappily, nevertheless, the cause of not doing right.

Again it is said: "However often I have heretofore failed, and however strong my habits may be the other way, still I know, nevertheless, that it is possible for me forthwith to do right." One who says this scarcely wishes to express anything contrary to the doctrine of the uniformity of human volition. He could scarcely mean that another line of conduct will come about without a cause, or that it will be possible for him to act rightly even though the motives leading to such conduct are weaker than the opposite motives. But he means: "It lies in my power to act otherwise; it depends only upon my will; I could act otherwise if I should will to do so." And perhaps he means also: "I regard it as conceivable that I, in the future, in that special situation, should have another will than I did before; I have no ground for supposing that my will is always to remain the same." Perhaps, indeed, the change of will is very probable. The evil consequences of his act now come clearly before his consciousness, or special experiences permit him to feel deeply the evil of his conduct; the strong impulse which forced him to do badly is now very weak in him, or has quite died out; the better way of living now comes vividly before his thought; it appears almost like a present reality; and so he believes that in the future he will act otherwise; he forms the resolution to improve himself. But how often is that belief erroneous, and how often is that resolution broken! "The way to hell is paved with good intentions." If he comes again into temptation, perhaps the impulse to evil will be so strong as to keep his resolution weak; so again he does the evil deed. But although resolutions are often broken, still they are also often kept; the impulse to evil can be

overpowered by a stronger one toward the good. But which of the two possibilities will be realized is not an affair of accident ; and many a time our knowledge of a man's character is so exact that we can almost with certainty predict whether he will keep a resolution he has formed or break it. The decision depends upon the relative degree of the feelings, and everything which strengthens the motive leading to good tends to a decision that way. If we succeed in awakening or strengthening the noble side of a man's nature—often the mere expression of our trust in his goodness is sufficient—we shall probably move him to right action. Let us bring to the man's consciousness the distinction between the difficulty and the impossibility of a deed, and convince him that no outward fate forces him along the evil way, but that it depends wholly upon himself, upon his own will ; let us arouse in him a belief in himself by showing him the good that is really in him, let us point out to him the self-respect, the delight in himself, which will accompany the right act ; and we shall in many cases win him over to the right. He will walk in that way, not by accident, not without cause, but because now new motives are active in him, or old ones have been strengthened.

Listen to the confession of a great man who succeeded in conquering himself : “ But that new will, which had begun to be in me, freely to serve Thee and to wish to enjoy Thee, O God, the only assured pleasantness, was not yet able to overcome my former wilfulness strengthened by age. Thus did my two wills, one new and the other old, one carnal, the other spiritual, struggle within me ; and by their discord undid my soul. Thus I understood by my own experience what I had read, how the flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh. It was myself verily either way ; yet more in that which I approved in myself than in that which in myself I disapproved. For in this last, it was for the most part not myself, because in much I rather endured against my will than acted willingly. And yet it was through me that custom had obtained this power of warring against me, because I had come willingly whither I willed now not to be. . . . I was troubled in spirit, most vehemently that I

entered not into thy law and covenant, O my God, which all my bonds cried to me to enter, and therein we enter not by ships, or chariots, or feet ; nay, move not so far as when I come from the house to that place where we were sitting. For not only to go but to arrive was nothing else but to will to go ; but to will resolutely and thoroughly ; not to turn and toss this way and that, with a half-divided will, struggling, with one part sinking as another rose. . . . For in these spiritual things ability is one with will, and to will is to do ; and yet at that time was it not done ; and more easily did my body obey the weakest willing of my soul in moving its limbs at its nod than the soul obeyed itself to accomplish in the will alone this momentous will. . . . But it willeth not *entirely*, therefore doth it not command *entirely*. For so far forth it commandeth, as it willeth : and, so far forth is the thing commanded, not done, as it willeth not. For the will commandeth that there be a will ; not another, but itself. But it does not command *entirely*, therefore what it commandeth, is not. For were the will *entire*, it would not even command it to be, because it would already be. It is therefore no monstrosity partly to will, but a disease of the mind, that it doth not wholly rise, by truth up-borne, borne down by custom. And, therefore, are there two wills, for that one of them is not *entire* : and what the one lacketh the other hath. . . . Deliberating upon serving the Lord my God now, as I had long purposed, it was I who willed, I who nilled, I, I myself. I neither willed *entirely*, nor nilled *entirely*. . . . How sweet did it at once become to me, to give up the sweetnesses of those toys ! and what I feared to be parted from, was now a joy to part with. For Thou didst cast them off from me, Thou true and highest sweetness. Thou castedst them forth, and in place of them enteredst in Thyself, sweeter than all pleasure, though not of flesh and blood ; brighter than all light, but more hidden than all depths ; higher than all honour, but not to the high in their own conceits.”—*St. Augustine*.

Some believers in the chaos theory of the will have said that the proposition : “the will is determined by the strongest motives,” is either nonsense or is false. For, they affirm, we know

which is the strongest motive in relation to the will, only by its final triumph over the others, so that to be determined by the strongest motive means nothing more than that the prevailing motive prevails. But if the proposition intends to affirm that the motive which is felt to be strongest determines to action, this is false; for often impulses to action are successfully withstood although the person is conscious that it is easier to yield than to withstand. In fact, exactly that struggle of motives which is morally important is the one which takes place when a sensuous motive which is felt to be strongest drives us in one direction; while a motive which in the eye of reason is the strongest impels us in the contrary direction; that is, when we have the conviction that it is our duty or our interest to withstand desires or passion, although more effort is necessary to withstand than to yield. Although in such a struggle the flesh often gets the upper hand of the spirit, this does not always happen; a man has the power either to act in accordance with his knowledge of the best, or to obey the impulse which is felt to be strongest. The properly virtuous deed is just that which succeeds in the line of greatest resistance.

But this argument in favour of arbitrariness and accident is not sound. Even although there be no further test of the strength of motives than their effect upon the volition, and although the strongest motive means merely the triumphant motive, still the proposition that the will follows the strongest motive is by no means meaningless. It declares that that motive which now determines to action will always, under the same circumstances, do the same—and therefore that there is no room for accident. "We say, without absurdity," remarks Mill, "that if two weights are placed in opposite scales, the heavier will weigh the other up, yet we mean nothing by the heavier, except the one that weighs the other up. The proposition, nevertheless, is not unmeaning, for it signifies that in many or most cases there *is* a heavier, and that this is always the same, not one or the other as it may happen." When it is said that the will follows the strongest motives, certainly more is meant than simply the circumstance that the

will follows the motive which is felt to be strongest—that it is a universal law of nature for the will to be determined by the feeling which, in the moment of action, is most agreeable or least disagreeable. When a man, as he believes, feels that a more strongly felt motive is overcome by the more feebly felt motive, he appears to confound strength of sensuous excitement with strength of feeling; feelings which presuppose an activity of the understanding like those which relate to our lasting welfare or to our duty, are, as a rule, more quiet, less violent, bound up with less excitement than our sensuous impulses, and still they often have a far higher degree of joy or of pain than the others. Even those who regard action according to the weaker motive as possible, acknowledge that the notion of acting in the direction of the greatest resistance is often deceptive. Thus one of them says: “When the coward yields to duty and goes to war, he may then easily convince himself that if he had stayed away he would have escaped the tortures of fear and danger, and have taken the easier course; while, if he chooses the other way, he might as easily believe that the easier course would have been that which avoided disgrace and degradation. The way which we did not take may often without difficulty be made to appear the easier.” If, as often happens, one says: I would certainly rather do this, but, nevertheless, I do that; or my whole inclination is to the side of this conduct, but I choose that—he really means: I should rather do this, if it did not have those consequences, or if it were not so wrong; but just this circumstance that it is wrong determines me not to do it. My sensuous liking tends to this conduct, but my inclination to do right or to further my own highest well-being tends to that other course of action, and so I choose this latter. Or could anyone really mean: I prefer this conduct, although I prefer the opposite. But let us assume that we are sometimes really conscious that a more strongly felt motive is overcome by one more feebly felt—because many, who recognise the above explained law of the will as valid for all not habitual actions, seem inclined to regard as exceptions to that law frequently executed acts—would anything be gained by the notion

of a will without cause? Surely nothing. For we must consider human conduct not simply from the point of view of psychology but also from that of physiology. Physiological processes underlie the phenomena of consciousness; and if a more feebly felt state of consciousness should get the upper-hand over a strong impulse and determine the conduct, nothing but this will follow, that the physiological process which is the basis of the feebler state of consciousness, would be more effective in determining action than that which lies at the base of the stronger feeling.

It has been said that "the struggle of virtue is fought out in the realm of ideas." It consists in suppressing by an expression of free will, impulses toward things which the reason declares not worth choosing, and in giving free play to the wish for things worthy to be chosen. This control of the desires, it is said, is brought about by the will, which holds the good ideas near and keeps at a distance the bad ones. By an application of mental energy the weaker idea becomes the stronger. The amount of effort requisite is determined by the magnitude of the resistance. If the sensuous impulses are weak, the effort is also weak; this is made stronger by the presence of a great obstacle to be overcome. And if a short definition of moral action should be desired, nothing better, it is said, could be given than this: It is an act in the line of the greatest resistance. Against all this the following may be remarked: no one has denied that a struggle of virtue is fought out in the realm of ideas. But it is not an event without cause; it is fought out with weapons, which a man has, not with such as he has not. A desire for that which we recognise as not worthy of choice will not be combated, if we have no wish for the thing worthy of desire; it will not be conquered, if this wish is not stronger than that. A man will keep the idea of good deeds in consciousness and will seek to drive out the idea of the tempting evil ones as long as his wish to act right is in control; the idea of the wrong act will become the central point of attention in the moment when the desire for it wins supremacy. Every ruling passion can take possession of the centre of consciousness, and expel to the background that of duty. What is the reason

that we at one time successfully withstand temptation, at another time yield to it? Is this difference in conduct without reason? That the amount of effort is determined by the magnitude of the resistance is true, in the same sense in which it is true that the amount of effort required to lift a weight is determined by the heaviness of the weight. The heavier it is the greater effort will the man make—provided that he wills to lift the weight; if a man wills the end he must also will the means. But what determines to this action is not the weight or its heaviness, but the object we wish to attain through the action; and the stronger the desire for this, the greater the effort, which if needed will be applied. If life and death depended upon the lifting of a weight we should exert ourselves more attentively than if only self-satisfaction or vanity invited to the act. If no motive for the act is at hand we let the weight lie where it is. The amount of exertion is therefore directly in proportion to the strength of the motive in question, and only indirectly to the magnitude of the obstacle to be overcome; and the amount of success is according to the relation which the person's strength bears to the task to be done. This holds good not only in the case of men but also of the lower animals; an animal measures the exertion which is necessary in order to make a certain leap, according to the distance which must be sprung over, and it attains its object if its powers are equal to the leap. But while the magnitude of the difficulties inflame the energies of the person or animal to the activity, still it can bring into action only the supply of energy on hand, it cannot produce forces out of nothing.

The exertion to suppress a given wish and to bring another thought into supremacy, is itself a mental act which like all actions is determined by motives. If it were not a consequence of the activity of our own energies it would not be *our* exertion. Our will, some one will perhaps say, is the cause of our effort. Certainly the effort is something willed. But by what is this act of the will determined? Perhaps some one else will answer, it is itself an utterance of free will, the will determines its own activity and this is true self-determination. But if the will determines its



act, this determination happens naturally through an act of the will. What now determines *this* act of the will? Once more we must ask, Is the will again determined by an act of the will? And will this last act be determined by another, and so on without end? The statement that every really free act of the will is determined by the will itself, therefore by an act of the will, leads to an endless regression—to the assumption of a succession of acts without beginning in a being which had a beginning. Similarly it has been said that a man can will what he wills, which sets up one will behind the other. To ask whether a man can will a will, Hobbes declared, is as blundering as to ask whether a man can will to will a will, and so on, without end.

(4.) *Uniformity and Social Intercourse.*

All human intercourse rests upon the tacit recognition of the law of cause and effect. It would cease if men could not infer the appearance and activity of certain motives, and could not expect certain actions or restraints from actions. Men presuppose motives in all the actions of their fellow-men, and it seems to them of great importance to make sure of the springs of action in any line of conduct; they never believe that a man kills others or himself, or that he lies or deceives, or goes to war, or insures his life, or founds an orphan asylum, without being determined in his action by motives. And they never believe that these motives, under the same circumstances, would one time bring forth these and the next time those acts; or that motives cease to act without being suppressed by other more powerful motives. As we assume that in the physical world things preserve their characteristics and like causes always bring forth like effects, this same thing we assume in the mental world. As the peasant believes that the seed will spring up and bear fruit, so also does he believe that men will buy of him the grain if he demands a moderate price. As he is certain that his ploughs can tear the earth, likewise he takes for granted that his hired workmen will do the ploughing. Just as he knows that the soil will not bring forth the corn if he does not sow, in the same way

he knows that his workmen will not do the work if he does not give them wages. A rational man, whether peasant, soldier, merchant, or politician, in his deliberations and calculations takes into account the definite characteristics of his fellow-men, as much as of the things in inanimate nature. All state institutions, indeed all human arrangements, take for granted the validity of the law of cause and effect, for they all seek to affect the conduct of men by influencing motives. In fact, as Bain says, if uniformity did not prevail in the moral world we could no more exist than if occasionally the force of gravity were to be suspended.

(5.) *Uniformity and Qualities of Character.*

If the human will were a phenomenon without a cause we could have no trust in any man, no one could be relied upon at all. For no one would have personal characteristics, which would lead him to definite lines of action, but in the essence of every one there would exist a certain incalculable element, and we could therefore never calculate with certainty a given line of conduct. If the inference from causes to effects and from effects to causes did not hold in this department, we could not infer from given men certain actions, and from given actions who the men were that performed them. The belief of man in man, the true basis of all social union, would be pure folly. And every man would necessarily lose all confidence in himself; as he could draw conclusions as to no one else, as he could build his plans upon no one else, as he could give security for no one else, likewise also could he never have any faith in himself. He might have a strong sense of duty; but unhappily he would have also a power to will without motives, and this power might make itself manifest in opposition to his good as well as to his bad motives; it might make him without a cause, and by accident, do a good deed; but likewise, by accident, do evil. The upholders of the doctrine of uncaused volition do not know, as Riehl well says: "How fatal the possession of such a capacity would be. What to them appears as good would in truth be an evil

more disastrous than every actual evil to which men now are subject. If nothing could determine the will, inasmuch as it is determined by nothing, then sympathy, duty, the idea of the good, could not determine it. . . . Every one of us would be forced to tremble at the thought of what our own actions were to be the next moment. How could anyone trust to the energy of his character and the fixedness of his principles, if his character and his principles did not rule his will?" On the supposition that there is such a power in men, it would be an idle fancy to think that moral differences exist at all between men, and that there is such a thing as virtue or vice; and therefore all morality would be an empty dream. According to Fichte A and non-A are equally possible for every human will in every case. But then, wherein would the difference consist between a good and a bad will? No longer is the tree to be known by its fruits; for that which we regarded as its fruits is in truth not its fruits. "If we call one man brave and another a vile wretch, this presupposes a certain uniformity and steadiness in their volitions, and implies certain characteristics of the person, and in this supposition there is no room for the equal possibility of A and non-A to happen. Is not the highest praise just this, to say of anyone that a dishonourable act is absolutely impossible for him? Do we not look upon it as an insult if anyone holds us capable of a mean deed? When has the healthy judgment of man assumed that every man is capable of being bribed, and every woman of being led astray? When has it regarded a character as moral without assuming the possibility of certain foreknowledge of the person's conduct? And has it not always regarded the excellence of a man as higher, the greater his steadfastness has been in the good, and the more surely his persistence in right action could be depended upon? Has not Luther always been admired for saying, "Here I stand, I cannot act otherwise?" And to the question: "If the outward condition of a man is just the same as before, and if the man has not changed, having become neither better nor worse, will he then act otherwise or the same," to this question does the healthy man not necessarily answer; "He will act just as before,"

If the acts of the will were without a cause, all human actions would be morally meaningless ; for we could never infer from conduct definite motives and qualities of character. Suppose a man finds himself in a critical crisis morally, which demands action of him. Motives of self-love, benevolence, and duty impelling him in various directions make themselves felt in his consciousness. Finally the sense of duty prevails as being at the moment the man's strongest impulse, and his act is therefore moral. If now anyone declares that a man under exactly the same inner and outward conditions could have acted otherwise, we must put the question : Why did the man act exactly as he did, and not otherwise ? Why did he do just his duty, and not something opposite to it ? How comes it that one person under these outward circumstances acts according to duty, while another in the same situation transgresses it ? He does it, our friend perhaps answers, because he willed, because it was his free will ! Yes, but why did he will, why did his free will decide for the right instead of for the wrong act ? Was the cause of it that he decided just so and not otherwise ? If we deny that a motive determined him, we make his act a matter of mere accident ; the motives must have been in his consciousness, but according to that theory they did not decide anything ; then the decision must have happened without motive ; the choice of the good did not happen for the sake of the good ; it was therefore morally worthless. A choice without motives, without reason and wisdom, without goodness and justice, a choice from pure accident, such would be the volition which did not come under the law of cause and effect. Such acts float in the air, they are not connected with the character of the man. Hume says : " Actions are by their very nature temporary and perishing ; and where they proceed not from some *cause* in the character and disposition of the person who performed them, they can neither redound to his honour, if good, nor infamy, if evil. The actions themselves may be blameable ; they may be contrary to all the rules of morality and religion. But the person is not responsible for them ; and as they proceed from nothing in him that is durable and constant,

and leave nothing of that nature behind them, 'tis impossible he can, upon their account, become the object of punishment or vengeance. According to the principle, therefore, which denies necessity, and consequently causes, a man is as pure and untainted after having committed the most horrid crime, as at the first moment of his birth, nor is his character any way concerned in his actions; since they are not derived from it, and the wickedness of the one can never be used as a proof of the depravity of the other."

(6.) *Uniformity and Education.*

If the doctrine of arbitrary volition were true, there could be no such thing as education. For by education is understood the application of certain means (causes) for the bringing about of certain ends (effects), viz., to improve a man's mental constitution; but that doctrine denies the causal connection of events in the domain of morals, it therefore denies that we can morally have any effect upon a man, that is, that there can be any moral education. Believers in the chaos theory of the will are accustomed to declare that an action determined by motives, or determined at all, cannot be moral. According to this doctrine, if we should succeed in calling forth certain motives in another person which had determined his act, that act of his would not be moral. The more effective our eloquence and persuasion, the more would his act be determined by us, and so much the more, therefore, we should be thwarting our wish to improve him. No man can exercise influence, it is said, upon the moral conduct of another.

"Knowledge is power." This is shown by the natural sciences by virtue of which we rule over the earth, and have subjected it to us. Our theory of the will teaches that the total life of mankind also is no exception to the general uniformity of nature; that laws prevail here also, which we will investigate, and the knowledge of which will put us in a position to extend the rule of man over the mental constitution of man,—to produce men

according to the pattern of our ideal. Our theory teaches that there are fixed laws for the formation of character, which may be discovered by observation ; and it fills us therefore with a glad confidence that wise and conscientious labour will be fruitful of good in improving human character. The theory of indeterminism, in denying the uniformity of human volitions, destroys this confidence. According to it, our hopes are vain, and, indeed, not because of the difficulty of the task or the complicated nature of the object to be transformed, but because of its essence, because the will, as Leibnitz said, is "a deserter from the general order of things." According to this fatalistic view we have no power over future moral events ; they will take place without us and in spite of us.

#### (7.) *Uniformity and Self-Culture.*

What holds good of education is also true of self-culture. To train one's self means : conscious, by help of influences at hand, to direct for the better one's own future conduct. But according to the chaos theory we can do no such thing ; if we could, our conduct would not be moral. Virtues and vices would not stand in causal connection with anything which preceded them. This doctrine tends to check the desire for moral self-improvement, and weaken the sense of responsibility ; for what I do to-day is said to be morally without effect upon what I shall do to-morrow—there is no moral unity in a man's life.

Our theory teaches that we can change our character if we will—that it is not only built up for us, but also by us—that it is never too late to will the better. It therefore, also, in this sense recognises a certain moral freedom. We cannot immediately, when it pleases us, acquire a certain character. If we could there would be no such thing as character. But neither can our teachers do that, but can only set in operation circumstances which would ennoble our character. Now this we can do ourselves. We can change our outward situation and association, we can exercise influence upon our thoughts and feelings, and thereby influence our future conduct. As a fact we continually

work upon our character ; for every one of our acts produces or strengthens a disposition to repeat the same act : every deed of moral significance heightens our confidence in our power, or increases our distrust in ourselves. And conscious moral self-constraint helps us after a time to do the right thing without self-constraint, and to acquire a fixed virtue.

That we do not succeed in ennobling our character if we do not really will to, is not the work of some humiliating necessity, nor an occasion of just complaint ; for if we did succeed without willing it, the elevation of our character would not be our work. If the spirit is really willing, it will conquer the weak flesh ; if the belief is really there, we do not need to have our unbelief helped. Still, if anyone only wishes a little to be good, but still more to be bad, his effort toward the good will have no real success ; the struggle of the motives is decided in this, as in every other case, by their relative strength. The ennobling of character does not come without a cause, as little as the strengthening of muscle ; nor does the cause of the elevation of character, the wish for it, arise accidentally ; nothing in the earnest deliberation which precedes the decision to change one's way of living is without cause. The wish to lay aside the old Adam and to put on the new man, is brought about by the power of the example of great moral personality, by shame and remorse, by experience of the bad effects of one's present character. Whoever would make men better must try to cultivate in them motives which bring about self-improvement ; he must make them feel the misery and pitiableness of their condition, and hold up before their eyes the pattern of character ; he must call forth their nobler feelings and their desire for moral peace and joy, and try to give them faith in themselves. Not seldom has it been sufficient simply to throw into a man's mind the mere thought of the better, the ideal of the good, in order to give his thoughts and actions a right direction. He went along the old rut because he lacked every idea of a higher aim, and it is sufficient to turn his eye toward them in order to awaken the dormant powers of his character. But the inspiring force of example, which places before the eyes of all the

practicability of goodness, is greater than all the power of mere thought ; and this influence of personality is morally the most important.

“ The greatest gift the hero leaves his race,  
Is to have been a hero. If we fail !—  
We feed the high tradition of the world,  
And leave our spirit in our children’s breasts.”

(8.) *Uniformity and Commandment.*

“ If a man had no free will,” many say, “ it would be absurd to command him to do anything, to give him good advice, or to attempt to persuade him of anything. Does one command or advise a machine ? If anyone ought to do a thing, he must also be able to do it.”

This remark is quite correct ; but it is no objection against the doctrine of uniformity of volition. This doctrine recognises perfectly, as we have seen, the freedom of the will here spoken of, as much as any other theory. We know that it is sometimes said : If acts of the human will are uniform phenomena, then man is not an active being, but a machine. “ I believe I address in your royal highness, not an automaton made to be at the head of a few thousand human puppets, but one of the freest of beings.” Thus wrote Voltaire to Frederick the Great, who had maintained against him the doctrine of uniformity. But according to this doctrine, as much as according to any other, man has understanding, feeling, and will, and acts according to his own will, and his own understanding ; and all this we cannot affirm of a machine, an automaton, or puppet ; it would therefore be senseless, if one were in earnest, to call man a machine. Between a man and a machine exists in truth all the difference anyone could wish ; but the chaos theory declares a still further and a very unfortunate difference : while the activity of the machine is led by the thought of an intelligent being—that of its inventor and builder, the will of man, according to this theory, is left to the leadership of absolutely blind accident. We do not give a machine commands, because these would have no effect upon it ; it has no ears, it is



not a volitional being ; we must apply other means to set it in action. But if a being had ears and a will, still we should not give it orders, or advice, if its will and action were not determined by motives, for in this case also we should not be able to have any effect upon its action. We give a man orders and advice, because his will, as a matter of fact, is determined by motives. Commands, counsels, persuasions, are moral levers, forces which move the mind ; they are appeals to a man's fear or hope, to his sense of duty or honour, to his self-love, his love or veneration of others, or his hate. I should not seek to convince a man if I did not think that reasons given would make an impression upon him, that his reason was normally active ; I would not try to persuade him if I did not reckon upon the uniform activity of feeling and impulse.

A great orator or a great story-teller appeals to the human head and heart with perfect confidence in the natural consequences of his words. He will enlighten the mind of his fellow-men, and guide their feelings to what is better. "Thoughts and feelings," says Dühring, "are the highest power ; who leads them on to something nobler, directly looks out for everything else that concerns mankind." The decisive element is the effect upon the human heart, for this is the source of action. "The world," said Wendell Phillips, the great American orator, "suffers its grandest changes in nature, not by genius, but by the more potent control of character."

"If anyone," it is said, "ought to do a thing, he must also be able to do it." Certainly ! he must be able if he wills to. "Anything which ought to have happened, although it has not happened, must at least have been able to happen." This also is quite correct if it means that it could have happened if the man had willed. But if the meaning is that in order to declare an action to be such as ought not to have happened, we must presuppose it could also have remained undone under exactly the same preceding circumstances,—that it was therefore by chance— if this is the meaning, then the statement is quite unproved. Why can we not call a thing right or wrong unless we admit that

it was accidental? Must knowledge be accidental in order to be true or false? May a thing not be the effect of a cause, and at the same time be called beautiful or ugly? To show a thing to be right or wrong, means to point out its relation to the moral criterion; to show a thing to be logically necessary, means to reveal its relation to the preceding circumstances. These are two different affirmations, which can never come into conflict.

To sum up. The law of cause and effect is the basis of all conclusions as to present, past, and future events. We are forced to the recognition of this law by experience and the constitution of our understanding. In all departments which have been scientifically investigated, the uniformity of events is, as a matter of fact, to be met with; and if we could not infer like events from like causes we should be forced to stop thinking, since this is the essence of all thinking. To think about human conduct means to assume that it is uniform. In each moment a man has definite qualities according to which he acts. He is born with certain endowments, which develop themselves in a certain way, according to the outward circumstances influencing him; his character finds its complete explanation in these inward and outward causes. An evident confirmation of the doctrine of uniformity in human action, is found in the result of statistics, from which many persons have erroneously drawn fatalistic conclusions. Chance contradicts the law of cause and effect, but freedom does not; on the contrary, physical, political, intellectual or moral freedom and self determination, can exist only upon the presupposition of this law; we could not do what we willed, if our acts of the will did not have their cause in our constitution, that is, if they did not depend upon us, and if they did not bring about definite effects. When human action is called necessary, the word is not to be understood in the sense of forced, but in its logical significance; the understanding is necessitated to infer a definite act from given characteristics under given circumstances; this logical necessity contradicts, therefore, chance or accident, but not freedom of choice; a man

does not choose from accident but from motives. Great confusion has arisen from confounding the different meanings of the words necessary, accidental, possible, impossible. All social intercourse and political institutions are based on the supposition that also in the human world the law of cause and effect holds good. If this were not the case we could not influence or trust anyone; man would have no character, and all actions would be without moral significance, education and self-culture would be an impossibility. We could no more live in a moral world, in which the law of cause and effect was not in force, than we could live without it in the physical world. The attempt to find a conflict between our logical and our ethical conscience is fruitless. Ethics are not illogical, and logic not unethical. The law of cause and effect is not something contradictory to morals, but is its presupposition.

## CHAPTER VII.

### RESPONSIBILITY.

“ Each man's book of life is his own conscience.”

FRIEDRICH RÜCKERT.

#### (1.) *Imputability and Responsibility.*

WHAT do we understand by responsibility? It comes from the verb to respond, and this signifies to answer, particularly to a charge. To answer for a thing means to defend one's self against a charge. Where a regular system of law exists, every accused person is allowed to defend himself; and he is punished only in case he cannot clear himself of the accusation raised against him. Thus Festus said to the high priests of the Jews: “It is not the manner of the Romans to deliver any man to die before that he which is accused have the accusers face to face, and have license to answer for himself concerning the crime laid against him.” “I shall know how to answer for it” means: I shall know how to justify myself against a charge. “I take the responsibility upon myself,” means: I declare myself to be the one who is to be called to account if a charge is made. Responsibility, therefore, always implies that a complaint may be brought, and this, if it cannot be removed, implies liability to punishment, or, at least, an obligation to render compensation.

According to Section 44 of the Prussian Constitution: “The ministers of the king are responsible.” All of the king's acts of government, in order to be valid, require the signature of a minister, who thereby assumes the responsibility. According to Section 61: “The ministers, by a decision of the cabinet, can be accused, because of a transgression of the constitution, of bribery or

treason. Upon such accusations the highest court of justice of the monarchy in the united Senates decides. The minor regulations as to cases of responsibility, and methods of punishment, will be reserved for a separate law." By responsibility is understood nothing else than accusability, which implies, under circumstances, liability to punishment.

According to the kind of punishment, responsibility is legal, social, or moral. It is legal if the punishment is determined by the law of the State; social if the punishment consists of the blame and contempt of individual members of society; and moral if the punishment is that of the offender's own conscience. Closely related to the conception of responsibility is that of accountability. In general we say that a person is accountable when we judge that he has been the originator of an act. Accountability is either direct, as when the person has executed the deed; or is indirect, as when the person himself has caused another to execute the deed. In particular we understand by accountability the tracing of a punishable act to its originator, and such a constitution of the doer of the deed as makes him a proper object of punishment, whether he has transgressed legal, social or moral laws; while unaccountability means not punishable. And in what cases is a man not punishable? In all where punishment would be ineffective. Every punishment as such is evil, and may be inflicted only for the sake of some consequent good; if it cannot have the influence it is an unjustifiable infliction of evil and therefore is wrong.

Whoever doubts the doctrine that responsibility is to be determined according to whether punishment would have a good effect, is recommended to read Maudsley's work on "Responsibilities in Mental Disease," and then to ask himself the question how he would fix the limits of punishment so as not to be irrational or cruel, if not according to the good effect punishment would have. A person mentally diseased, who has committed a murder in consequence of a "fixed" idea, may have had perfect knowledge of the evil of his deed, and have been deliberate, and still his deed cannot have been a crime and cannot be justly

punished, because it was the result of his disease. If he should be condemned to death this would simply be judicial murder ; for his execution would exercise no influence upon others who were suffering from the mania to murder. It is true that society is in need of protection, but this is furnished, not only by the gaols and the prisons, but also by the insane asylum. It is for the specialist to decide whether a man is fit for an asylum or not, and this specialist is not the judge, but the physician for the insane.

Imputability has the same relation as responsibility to punishment. "Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin" means: Blessed is the man whom the Lord will not punish because of his sin. And as we distinguish according to the kind of punishment, the legal, social and moral responsibility, so also we may distinguish the legal, social and moral imputability.

Some persons have maintained that if the law of cause and effect were universally applicable, imputability and responsibility would come to an end. This is, in effect, to declare that legal, social or moral punishment would only be justifiable in cases where the continuity of cause and effect in a man's mental states had ceased. Brief deliberation, however, will show us that this opinion is the opposite of true. Let us examine first, *moral* punishment or pain of conscience.

### (2.) *Pain of Conscience.*

This feeling, which may vary in strength from a weak sense of regret to mental torture, and may even lead to suicide, is a feeling of suffering which we experience in consequence of something which we have done or left undone, and which we regard as wrong. It is a dissatisfaction with ourselves which arises when memory brings before our mind's eye some act of ours which our present sense of duty condemns. If the act at the same time contradicts other strong impulses of our nature, like love, or rational self-interest, our suffering becomes so much the stronger. Pain of conscience arises only when our conduct is dependent upon our will—when the thing done or left undone was, therefore, really wrong.

With the pain of conscience is often connected the unhappy longing that what has happened might not have happened. This wish is naturally irrational, because directed toward what is impossible. "To wish that any event had not happened," says Schopenhauer, "is foolish self-torture ; for it is to wish an absolutely impossible thing, and is as irrational as the wish that the sun should rise in the west." But he quite erroneously adds : "Just because all that happens, great or small, takes place by rigid necessity, it is wholly in vain to meditate over it, and think how slight and accidental the causes were which brought it about, and how very easily they could have been different, for this is an illusion, inasmuch as they all take place with as rigid necessity, and have been caused by as supreme power, as that in consequence of which the sun rises in the east." It is by no means in vain to meditate how slight the causes were which brought about or hindered a certain event—provided only the causes were such as a man could influence, such as he could bring about or hold at a distance if he willed. That such meditation is not in vain would perhaps be proved by a man's personal conduct the next time the same circumstances reappear ; inasmuch as the man now, perhaps in consequence of that regret, will bring about or prevent the causes which occasioned it before. And although the wish to undo the past which is beyond recall, is folly, still the effort to circumvent the bad consequences of the past deed as far as possible, and to make reparation, is quite rational, indeed is morally demanded.

If in remorse a man says to himself : "I could have done otherwise—I had no need to do that !" this is quite true ; so far as he only intends to express the opinion that he could have acted otherwise if he had willed to do so. An external check to acting otherwise was not present ; and perhaps the very next time, therefore, he will, under exactly the same external temptation, not act as previously, in consequence of the beneficent influence of remorse. But if a man, as sometimes happens, fancies that he could have acted otherwise, not only under the same external, but also under the same internal, conditions, with the same thoughts and

feelings, that is, without having any new motive come into consciousness, this is certainly a mistake, as he generally sees when he meditates over his conduct. The mistake arises from his not being able to actualize any longer his previous state of mind, his motives and their relative degree of strength; and from his reading into former conditions his present mental disposition, according to which he finds his past conduct quite inconceivable, as now he would act otherwise. The notion that a man could act differently under the same inner and outer conditions is erroneous, but the resolution to act otherwise in the future, which regret for the past often produces, may be carried out, and it will be, if it continues strong enough.

We may distinguish pain of conscience as it is related to the past, to the present, and to the future. Primarily it is directed toward the past, toward the unjust deed that has been done; it is a retaliative, compensatory feeling. But if a man has the firm conviction that he is no longer capable of the conduct which he regrets,—if he is certain that in this respect no blame can touch his present character,—his feeling of displeasure at the thought of his act, if the feeling still lives, will be far weaker than if he had to say to himself that the deed, the iniquity of which he recognises, is a consequence of elements still existing in his character, that he is now still as bad as then. But pain of conscience has also a relation to the future; it is a subjective punishment, and, as such, has a reformatory and preventive influence; reformatory in so far as it may lead to good resolutions,—and not all these are broken—preventive in so far as the fear that one shall have to blame one's self, and to lose inward satisfaction and self-respect, is adequate to hold one back from wrong-doing.

Remorse may arise not merely in consequence of disobedience to conscience, but from the failure to satisfy any other impulse that is strong for the time being,—if we may use the word remorse in a wide sense. Selfish remorse is a feeling of dissatisfaction with ourselves, which is brought about by remembering an act that has been detrimental to our own fondest interest. A man can feel selfish remorse on account of having been too hasty, or on account



of having yielded to anger or any passing impulse, or to benevolence, or even to conscience itself. Selfish or, as in this case we should have to say, egoistic remorse for some conscientious act—the very opposite of moral remorse—arises when the act has damaged the man's own interest, and when, during his remembrance of the act, self-interest dominates in his consciousness. This remorse for moral acts is, provided it be not quite transient, the sign of a degeneration of character, and tends to its future demoralization; while moral remorse is the first step toward the elevation of character. If selfish remorse is directed toward some injury to self-interest for which there is no moral justification, and for which we are accountable, it is a beneficial and commendable feeling, for it tends to make us avoid the foolish deed in the future. Some self-vexation at an imprudent deed does no harm; it will remind us in the future of our former blunders, and lead us to more deliberate action; if there were no selfish remorse, bitter experience would not tend to make us as wise as it does. Kroenig gives the practical rule: "Do not trouble yourself more than is useful for you." He might have added: "Do not trouble yourself less than is useful for you;" for in fact many light-headed natures trouble themselves far too little for the foolish things they do. Selfish remorse, with the reasonable man, arises only when he could have hindered the event which damages his prosperity, in case he had willed to do so. If we have summoned up for any undertaking all our practical judgment, prudence, and foresight, but still, in consequence of circumstances that could not be foreseen, we miss our aim, we may naturally feel displeasure and regret, but so far as we are rational we will not feel any remorse proper; inasmuch as there exists no ground for self-blame.

Believers in chance have declared that shame, remorse, the gnawing of conscience, would cease if men should see that any act under all the given inner and outer circumstance was inevitable. But these believers in chance have omitted to offer any grounds whatever for their remarkable statement. If a man recognises that his moral constitution is such as leads inevitably to vicious

deeds, this is the strongest inducement for him to condemn his moral constitution, to feel pained about it and to set himself to reform it. But if the doctrine that action is possible without a motive, should once really take possession of a man, then he would most certainly cease to feel any pain of conscience. For, according to his conviction, his acts would no longer be the inevitable results of his character or his motives, he could no longer infer from his deeds what he himself is, he could no longer sit in judgment on his own character, for he would know that his acts might have had quite another source than his own character, namely, it might have sprung from arbitrary accident, which could lead to good or bad ; or rather, he would be certain that such a thing as character does not exist at all, and that therefore a man cannot feel pain over his character. The act was accidental, it is past, it does not permit him to infer anything as to future acts,—how then does it concern him at all ?

### (3.) *Blame.*

An act without a cause is an object neither of blame nor of self-blame. It has been said : “ If all human conduct is necessitated, praise and blame, reward and punishment, would be meaningless ; there would be no moral transgression at all, there would be no sin ; for was not Augustine right in declaring sin to be an act which a man is free to leave undone ? ” If by this is meant, as it probably is, that actions cannot be praised or blamed, rewarded or punished, accounted creditable or guilty, unless a man has the power to leave it undone, that is, unless he could leave it undone provided he willed to, in short, if they were not actions, then the meaning is quite correct ; then “ necessitated ” is understood in the sense of forced. Only what is willed, what is freely chosen, is an object of praise and blame, of reward and punishment, and everything is free which can be done or left undone, if only the motives to do or to abstain from doing are strong enough. If a man wished to blame or punish that which could not be brought about by any motive however strong, he would be

inflicting aimless suffering, and, therefore, committing a wrong. But if by necessitated is not understood the opposite of free or willed, but only of accidental, then the statement that a thing necessitated cannot be an object of praise, blame, reward, or punishment, is the very opposite of true.

What connection does there exist between the arbitrariness of actions, on the one hand, and, on the other, blame and punishment, or praise and reward? Do we blame or punish a man because his act was without cause? Do we praise or reward a man because his act was mere chance? Wherein consisted the difference between the object of praise and that of blame, if the ground of the one as of the other were always merely that the act happened without a sufficient cause? Are human deeds good because they are chosen without a motive? Then all deeds so chosen are good. But that surely the believers in mere accident cannot think; for certain lines of conduct chosen without a cause they themselves regard as bad. Still, if they say that only such can be accounted bad as are without a cause, we must again ask whether they are bad for the same reason. If this were the case, then all uncaused deeds would be bad. They would therefore have to admit that the arbitrariness of acts is not the ground for declaring them good or bad, but the circumstance that they accord with the moral law or transgress it.

Why do we praise, why do we blame deeds? What do we understand by praise and blame? In the most general sense of the word, we mean by the former an expression of approval; by the latter an expression of our disapproval. In a narrower case we mean *moral* approval or disapproval. It is in this narrower sense that we here have to deal with the bad. In general we blame an act if we regard it as wrong; we blame the person who commits the act. We ought to disapprove the motive of the wrong act; if we expect good results from the expression of our disapproval, if we have reason to assume that it will bring the person to better conduct. If now an act were not willed, if it had not been purposed, it could not be an object of approval, however good the consequences may have been. A happy or an

unhappy "accident" is all that we could say of it. If the act was willed but not determined by a motive we could only say : It was only a happy or an unhappy accident that just this act of the will happened to take place ; a judgment as to character, as to the moral worth of the perpetrator of an act, could never be made, for such a judgment could only be inferred from the nature of the motives which determine the act. Under no such conditions should we blame a person, that is, inflict mental pain upon him, for nothing good could come from such infliction of pain, and we must not be cruel. Our blame could in no wise effect his reformation ; for according to the doctrine of arbitrary accident there is no such thing as influencing another person morally ; nor any such thing as moral reformation. To blame morally is only, then, justifiable when the blame can awaken self-condemnation ; but we have seen that this must be given up according to the doctrine of arbitrary choice ; the man will not feel self-disapproval if he knows that the act of the will has arisen only through a motiveless choice in him. And as blame, so likewise praise, becomes meaningless ; there remains nothing for which anyone can be blamed or praised. The act did not arise from the bad or good constitution of the man's mind, it happened independently of motives. The action may have fallen out bad or good to-day ; to-morrow, under the same circumstances, it may fall out good or bad. We do not praise or blame mere choice. The healthy mind says : The greater the disposition in a man is towards the good, the more powerful the influence of conscience upon him, the more certain it is that he will act right ; and the more we can trust him, so much the more worthy is he of respect, so much the nearer perfect his moral excellence. If his sense of duty were so strong that he would always do what he knew to be right, however powerful the opposite motive might be, he would possess the highest virtue. And the greater a man's inclination is towards evil, the less influence his conscience has over him, and the more positive we are that he will yield to any given temptation, so much the more vicious his deed. The doctrine of indeterminism says : If it be true that a really benevolent man must necessarily do good

to his fellow-men, and that a hardened criminal must necessarily yield to temptation, then we cannot speak of the merit and virtue of the former or the guilt and vice of the latter. Our doctrine which is on the side of healthy common sense, would call the attention to the false reasoning involved in confusing two meanings of the word "necessary" and "must," and in overlooking the difference between physical necessity or being forced, and logical or moral necessity—the difference between the one signification of "must," in which the word refers to the influence of moral or non-moral motives, or of a good or bad character; and the other, in which the expression indicates the over-powering effect of external circumstances which resist the influence of motives or character.

What consequences would follow from identifying moral with physical necessity? That the latter, physical force, excludes all moral guilt and all desert of blame all persons agree; they further agree that the physical difficulty of resisting an act diminishes the guilt of that act proportionately. Now if the same relation existed concerning moral as concerning physical necessity, then the same thing would hold of moral as of physical difficulty. The greater the inclination toward evil, and therefore, the more difficult the good deed is, so much the less would be the moral guilt, and so much the less would anyone be to blame if he yielded to the inclination to evil. The strengthening of the disposition toward evil, the accumulation of bad habits, the hardening of the heart, would be morally without significance; it would not lead to greater transgressions, but everything would remain as it was; for exactly in proportion as the disposition to evil and the difficulty of acting right increased, the moral guilt of doing evil would diminish. And the same thing would be true of moral merit. Just as after I have done wrong a thousand times I should not be morally worse than I was before, and just as (if anyone wished to say that I had become worse) it would be necessary to show that my demoralization involved in it that which caused it, in like manner would a thousand good deeds in no wise elevate my moral goodness; or if anyone wished to say that I had become

better it would be necessary to add that this goodness contained in it something which made it worthless. Also if my goodness were acquired by accidental actions it would have no moral worth, for in proportion as it existed as a quality of character, it would now hinder accidental actions, and only such ought, according to the accidental theory, to have moral worth. Thus this theory converts exactly that wherein moral badness consists into an excuse, into a nullification of badness; and that wherein moral good consists, destroys goodness itself.

(4.) *Punishment.*

It is false reasoning based on the confounding of the different meanings of single words that leads persons to say: "If all actions could not have happened otherwise than they actually did, and only the actual is possible, all justification of punishment vanishes, as it evidently is wrong to punish a man for an act which it was not in his power to abstain from." Surely the punishment would be wrong because it would be an aimless infliction of pain if the deed, or abstention from it, was not in our power, that is, did not depend upon our will and could not be brought about by the influence of motives; but if we could have done it, in case we had willed, then it was in our power, and another actual occurrence than what really took place would have been brought about by us if we had willed it.

Why does a father punish his child when it has committed something wrong? Why does he inflict physical or mental pain on account of an act? Sometimes, without doubt, from anger and spite. But if he is faithful in his fatherly duty he does it from a moral ground; he will prevent the repetition of such an act and improve the disposition of the child. Suppose the child now says: "Father, why do you blame me, why do you strike me? The past is already past and cannot be changed, and at that time I only acted as I had to, under those inner and outer conditions, and as I should inevitably act again in case the same should return." What would a sensible father reply? This: "What you have said is quite correct; your conduct at that time was a

result of your mental constitution, which was harmful to yourself and others ; it came from motives you then had and it would inevitably be repeated under the same mental conditions, inasmuch as like causes produce like effects ; and for this very reason I punish you now, in order that if the same outward circumstances should recur you will no longer be in the same evil state of mind as then, and new motives will come into play. I expect that you will immediately act otherwise since changed causes have other effects. But should this expectation be disappointed, should you again act just as you did before, I should simply infer that your moral disposition had not been sufficiently changed by the treatment which I am now applying to you, and that the new motives were not yet strong enough to bring about the required conduct ; and I should have, therefore, to punish you more severely than now. You are quite right also when you say that your act is past and cannot now be changed ; but it does not, therefore, by any means lose its significance—for from it, I infer what your future conduct will be if your will remains as it is, and I learn from it how I ought to treat you in order to lead you for the future into another sort of conduct. In fact, if your act were not the inevitable effect of your mental constitution and of your motives, if you possessed the power to decide without motives and against motives, then I should not dare to punish you, because I could not influence your action ; against the misuse of a power of volition without motive there would be no preventive means.”

And the thoughtful statesman says : “ I know very well that men are determined in their actions by motives, and therefore, that they are capable of being led. The knowledge of the natural laws of human volition I make use of, in order to induce men to act for the general weal. The State for the security of society issues laws which are enforced through threats of punishment ; the protection which the laws secure to person, property, and public interests is a proof of the power to influence the motives and actions of the members of society. We punish the criminal, when he violates the laws, in order that a repetition of his evil

deed, either by himself or others, may, as far as possible, be prevented. If no criminal should be punished, human society would be dissolved."

The efficiency of punishment extends as far as the sphere of motives ; beyond this limit it is without effect, and, therefore, unjustifiable. Only that can rationally be an occasion for punishment which a man can be deterred from doing by a threat of evil consequences ; in other words, only that which depends upon his will. We cannot rationally punish a man for leaving a thing undone if no motive, however strong, could bring him to do it ; but if only the weakness of motive were the ground of abstention from the deed, the punishment may be in place ; for through it the motive may become less weak—the punishment is the necessary means of supplying the lacking energy. But it would be without effect, aimless, irrational, and immoral, if human action were not determined by motives, and if we could not exercise any influence upon action, although we brought many motives to bear. In human nature the impulse to retaliate and have revenge is strong ; and the punishment of a criminal is, therefore, customarily required not simply out of love to the general good, but also for the satisfaction of an immediate emotional need. But this is not the point of view which the developed moral consciousness regards as morally decisive, as it recognises only one highest standard of right—the general welfare. There are many natural desires and impulses, and revenge is one of them ; but because an act satisfies some natural impulse is not proof that it is right. The satisfaction of revenge can only be right if it accords with the common welfare.

According to Bentham's definition, legal punishments are evils which are inflicted according to legal form upon an individual who has committed an injurious act that is forbidden by law, for the purpose of preventing similar acts. At another place Bentham says : "Vengeance cannot be allowed to be the end of punishment ; for if vengeance be the end, the resentment of the person whose vengeance it is must be the measure ; there is no other. But the resentment of any man against an act mischiev



ous to society is sometimes greater, sometimes less, than in proportion to the mischievousness. It will sometimes be bestowed on acts not mischievous—it is different in different men ; it is different in the same man.” Originally, men punished, it is true, only from vengeance, but they have developed more and more to a rational and moral view of the matter ; still, even now, most persons think that punishment must, before all else, be retaliative or retributive—that there must be punishment simply because there has been transgression. But a punishment which is directed simply to the past, and not also to the future, which is not reformatory or deterrent (corrective or preventive), which does not take place in order that there may not be transgression again, is simply vengeance. Plato made this point clear in what Protagoras says : “ No one punishes those who have done wrong, directing his attention toward it simply because wrong has been done, except he wishes to have vengeance like an irrational brute. But whoever undertakes rationally to punish a person punishes, not because of the wrong that has been committed, for he cannot undo what has been done, but because of the future, in order that another time neither the same person, nor another who has seen him punished, may commit the same misdeed.” “ To suffer punishment, and to be disciplined becomingly for a wrong done, are not these the same ? ” asks the platonic Socrates in another passage, expecting an affirmative answer. Plato regards discipline only then as in place when it tends to prevent the repetition of the transgression, and this same view was held by Seneca and Grotius ; and Hobbes says : “ The intention of the law is not to grieve the delinquent for that which is past and not to be undone, but to make him and others just, else that would not be so, and respecteth not the evil act *past* after, but the good to come : inas-much as without the good intention for the future no past act of the delinquent could justify his killing in the sight of God. But you will say how is it just to kill one man to improve another if what were so were necessary ? To this I answer that men are justly killed, not for that their acts are not necessitated, but because they are noxious. If men necessarily act corruptly, they do not on that account act any the less corruptly.”

The punishment, the infliction of evil, is for the enlightened moral consciousness not an end in itself, but a means to a good end. It is the unavoidable means of preventing still worse evils. "It is a very great cruelty against mankind," says Rousseau, "to have sympathy with evil doers." In truth he did not mean sympathy, which is surely in place towards all unfortunate persons, but unjustifiable mildness, a too slight punishment. "To prevent sympathy from degenerating into weakness," he affirms, "we must make it universal and extend it over the whole human race." We must think not only of the criminal, but also of the persons he sacrifices. The punishment which is to be put upon him must not be slighter, and not greater, than is requisite in order to deter men from committing similar mischievous deeds. If it is slighter, the pain inflicted will be without effect; if it is greater, a portion will be inflicted to no purpose; in both cases, therefore, unjustifiable pain is inflicted. A man who really possessed the power of choosing without motives could be punished as little as an insane man; for the infliction of pain would be quite without effect. We ought rather to be satisfied with putting in a secure place the man whom arbitrary choice permitted to act injuriously to the community, just as we confine a man whose mental disease leads him to do a pernicious act; we should confine him where he could go to destruction without hurting others; for being haunted by uncaused volitions he could not live long.

The more barbarous the conditions of society, so much greater is the role which vengeance plays. The savage persecutes all who have injured him in the same way, whether an evil purpose, carelessness, or mere circumstance for which no one is to blame, is the cause of his injury. And it is not many centuries since, even in Europe, princes delighted in venting their indignation upon messengers who brought bad news. The further civilization advances, so much more is the impulse of vengeance suppressed, and so much the less cruel do punishments become. An ever-increasing number of men attain to the moral perception that the ancient notion of punishment, which regarded it as a satisfaction of the impulse to retaliate, must be given up, and that evils must

not be inflicted except in self-defence, and for the protection of society—without which man cannot be man. What is the aim of this new tendency of thought? Will the impulse of revenge sometime disappear entirely, and be replaced by human love and a sense of duty? Perhaps. Will not only the conception of punishment as a retaliation for evil be regarded as simply a peculiarity of the middle ages, but also will external evils, even for the end of preventing further evils, cease to be inflicted, and the purposes of punishment be attained in some other way? Will evil sometime be overcome simply with good? We hope so! But at present, as it appears, rationalised and civilised vengeance, the impulse to retaliation enlightened by reason and widened through sympathy and human love, cannot be dispensed with. Universal benevolence and the sense of duty must have attained a very high degree of strength, if through them, the beneficial effect of resentment and indignation against injustice and corruption of all kinds is no longer needed. As things stand now, the friend of mankind is to complain not of an excess, but of a lack of this feeling. As concerns the punishment of acts injurious to the community, it is certainly to be expected that our present prison system will undergo great improvements, but it is scarcely to be believed that prisons in general will become superfluous in a few hundred years.

In proportion as men reflect upon social phenomena, and at the same time in proportion as the sense of brotherhood grows, unmitigated hate against criminals will diminish. Is not the bad man nevertheless a man? "Is he not my brother?" A few years ago one might have read in the daily papers the following: "It is reported from Genoa that a band of kidnappers of children is carrying on there its unholy pursuit. The children are locked into public houses, are made drunk, and then sent to Marseilles where they are trained to be pickpockets." It is beyond a doubt that a great proportion of such children, growing up in the society of criminals, and trained by them, develop into criminals. Now will anyone, who knows the history of these most unhappy creatures, because they have transgressed inflict pain upon them? And how

do men in general become criminals? Inferior mental endowments,<sup>1</sup> bad education, bad companionship, hunger and misery, these are the sources of crime. No man becomes a criminal by accident. Who, now, is to blame that children have a bad education and bad companionship, and grow up in need and misery? Who is to blame in general for social suffering? The society, that is, the fellow-citizens of those unfortunates. And their fellow-citizens, who bear part of the guilt, ought they to inflict punishment, simply because there has been a transgression? "Criminals," says Maudsley, "are as much manufactured articles as are steam-engines and calico-printing machines, only the processes of organic manufacture are so complex that we are not able to follow them." Crimes are proofs, not only of individual, but also of social, moral evils; they are proofs that the social arrangements within which they are possible, or rather necessary, are not such as they ought to be. And who is to blame for this? Or let us rather ask: Does not every one who belongs to this society share in this guilt? Surely there are few who do not. Ibsen says: "A

<sup>1</sup> "All persons who have made criminals their study, recognise a distinct criminal class of beings, who herd together in our large cities in a thieves' quarter, giving themselves up to intemperance, rioting and debauchery, without regard to marriage ties or the bars of consanguinity; and propagating a criminal population of degenerate beings. For it is a matter of observation that this criminal class constitutes a degenerate or morbid variety of mankind, marked by peculiar low physical and mental characteristics. . . . They are scrofulous, not seldom deformed, with badly formed angular heads; are stupid, sullen, sluggish, deficient in vital energy, and sometimes afflicted with epilepsy. As a class they are of mean and defective intellect, though excessively cunning, and not a few of them are weak-minded and imbecile." And a physician who has had much experience with criminals, declared, as Maudsley quotes: "In all my experience I have never seen such an accumulation of morbid appearances as I witness in the *post mortem* examinations of the prisoners who die here. Scarcely one of them can be said to die of one disease, for almost every organ of the body is more or less diseased; and the wonder to me is that life could have been supported in such a diseased frame. Their moral nature seems equally diseased with their physical frame; and while their mode of life in prison reanimates their physical health, I doubt whether their minds are equally benefited, if improved at all."

man is never quite free from responsibility and guilt in the society to which he belongs."

(5.) *Desert and Guilt.*

The stoic emperor, Marcus Aurelius, knew well how much men are dependent in their ways and actions upon circumstances which are outside them. "I have to thank the gods," he says, "that my grandfathers, parents, sisters, preceptors, relations, friends, and domestics, were almost all of them persons of probity, and that I never happened to disoblige them or misbehave myself toward them, although, notwithstanding that my disposition was such that had occasion offered I might have acted thus; but by the goodness of the gods, I met with no provocation to reveal my infirmities . . . . It is a favour of the gods that I happened to meet with a brother whose behaviour and affection is such as to contribute both to my pleasure and improvement. It is their blessing . . . that I have a clear idea of the love in accordance with nature and the impression frequently refreshed. Now all this could never have been compassed without a protection from above and the gods presiding over fate."

It has been objected: "If everything is merely a matter of fortune and misfortune, can we then speak of merit or guilt? The actions of a man are simply links in a chain of causation, which, if we follow them back, lead to events outside the man himself, and previous to his personal existence. It would, therefore, be unjust to praise or to blame him, to reward or to punish him. We are responsible only for that which we cause; the cause of a cause is also the cause of the remotest effect; if I am caused, then the cause of my being is also the cause of my conduct; the responsibility falls, therefore, back upon this cause, but this also again is caused, and its cause is also caused, and so on; the responsibility therefore shifts itself ever further back endlessly, that is, it vanishes. The conception of responsibility, merit, and guilt, are then incompatible with the doctrine of a causal connection through all events. Every excellence in the conduct of a man, we ought

rather to say, is ultimately to be referred back to causes outside himself, except the original energy of the soul which exercises itself in the effort to carry out the freely chosen good or bad ; and it is not just to reward a man for qualities which he possesses by inheritance or education. So much is certain that if the defender of the universality of cause and effect will use the words responsibility, merit, guilt, and similar expressions, he must use them in new signification."

To this last remark we must first answer that the defender of uniformity in acts of the will does not use the words here referred to in a new signification, but that he unites with them a clear, definite sense. His theory is not a scientific theory alongside of that of common sense (for this does not set up any scientific doctrine), but it brings into clear consciousness the conception of common sense itself ; it is related to this, as science is related to instinct.

Common sense has never laid down the hypothesis that praise and reward, blame and punishment, virtue and merit, vice and guilt, presuppose interruption in the causal connection of things. If such conceptions, in order to be formed, really needed this hypothesis, in ancient times no one at all, and also now, with us, not one in a thousand would have attained them ; while they are in fact found in all stages of culture, and even with children. It is not right, it is said, to reward a man for characteristics which he possesses through inheritance or education. Now for qualities of character we do not reward any one at all, but for actions. But that actions are not to be praised if they are a consequence of excellent faculties and excellent education, is an opinion which common sense has surely never entertained. Common sense does not say that an artist or an explorer is without desert if he has talent or genius, if he is a born artist or explorer. It does not say that the order of merit is to be bestowed only upon those who have to thank simply their own indefatigable industry for everything which they own or can do. It understands by a man of merit one who has given proofs of pre-eminent artistic, scientific, moral, or general intellectual efficiency. What the causes were of

this efficiency is a question which one is not accustomed to put, when one wishes to know whether a man is a man of merit. Should we feel less respect toward a man whom we now honour if we found out that his parents and remoter ancestors had distinguished themselves by nobleness of character, and that he himself, as a result of such origin, had been good from earliest childhood, and that all the good germs in him had been developed into their beautiful bloom by the most careful education? From the notion that a quality of character is virtuous or vicious—not on account of its own nature but on account of the virtuousness or viciousness of its cause, it would follow that there are not any virtuous or vicious qualities of character at all. For if a quality in my mind cannot be virtuous on its own account, but only on account of its virtuous cause in me, then this cause also cannot be virtuous on account of its own nature, but on account of its virtuous cause and so on; thus we shall see virtuousness thrown back step by step for ever. Common sense is quite removed from such a notion, it says that a mental characteristic is good or bad on its own account, and not on account of the constitution of something else,—something which is not a characteristic itself, but its cause; it does not accept the view that a thing which in itself is innocent or not bad, is bad because another thing is bad; it does not try to explain the contradiction that that which is morally bad is not so. “To say that vice does not consist in what is vicious, but in its cause, is the same as saying that vice does not consist in vice but in what produces it.”

Let us for a moment take the position of those who declare that what is rooted in inherited or acquired qualities, has no merit. According to this view, if we wanted to estimate the moral desert of a man, we must deduct the excellent traits which he possesses by heredity or education. But, as everyone will admit, we cannot do that; if we did we could not pass any judgment as to the man's moral desert,—there would be no such thing as desert, and for the same reason, no guilt. And out of such a supposition it would further follow that a man might be morally injured by a good education, and so much the more injured the better and more

successful it was. For the more his good qualities were trained, so much the more should we have to deduct from his constitution, if we wished to determine his morality. And perhaps he might have acquired by himself just these same good qualities if they had not been trained in him. And likewise the fortunate moral disposition which a man inherited from his parents would be a fatal gift. These considerations would indeed have significance, only provided there could still be moral characteristics, although cause and effect did not hold good, but as we have seen, where the law of cause and effect does not hold there can be no such thing as virtue and vice.

What is the meaning of the attempt to deduct from a man's constitution that which he has inherited? It means to deduct from him all the characteristics in him which belong to the race. For would a being still be a man if it did not inherit the human character from its ancestors? "A man," says Stephen, "has of course qualities which he has inherited; but this is not to be understood as if there were a man *plus* inherited qualities, which, therefore, somehow diminish his responsibility. The whole man is inherited, if we may use such a phrase. He starts at his birth with qualities dependent of course upon the qualities of his parents. . . . The fact that he inherits a particular temper no more implies that he is one thing and the temper another thing superimposed, than the fact that he inherits the general characteristics of humanity would imply that the man is something in addition to all his essential qualities. . . . If the parents were monkeys instead of men, the child would be a monkey. . . . There is not a common something which becomes either monkey or man as a different form is imposed upon it."

It has been asked: "If everything is simply a matter of luck, how can we speak of desert and guilt?" Now, he who recognises a causal connection among events does not think that everything is a matter of mere luck, so far as by this is understood that a human will has no influence. To have merit means to be a justifiable object of reward or praise. To be guilty means to be a suitable object of punishment or blame. Now, praise and blame, reward and



punishment, are suitable if they have a good effect, and they have such influence only upon the supposition of the causal connection of deeds. The Platonic Protagoras says to Socrates: "I will now try to prove to you that men do not believe a man has virtue by nature, or that it comes wholly of itself, but that it can be taught, and that everyone who has attained it has attained it through diligence. Accordingly, if everyone has a defect, which as everybody believes he has from nature or by misfortune, no one gets angry with him, or blames, or teaches him, or punishes him, in order that he may get over the defect, but everyone has sympathy for him, as for the dwarf or the feeble man; who would be so unreasonable as to punish such a person? No one, for everyone, I believe, knows in these cases the good and the opposite come upon one by nature or by accident. But if anyone does not possess those good qualities, which we believe anyone may attain by diligence, exercise, and instruction, and if, on the contrary, he has the opposite defects, we naturally become indignant with him, and punish and warn him." Moral merit is virtue that has been tested, and virtues are qualities the acquirement of which can be attained by influence, inasmuch as they, at least to a degree, can be acquired if the wish to acquire them is strong and lasting, and the wish can be brought forth in a man by praise and blame. Praise and blame are moral levers; they quicken and strengthen the sense of conscience in another; they make action easier by adding the energy of the social sanction to the moral feelings, and they take the place of conscience if the person is not yet a morally developed being.

But it has been objected: "We are responsible only for that which we cause, but if I am caused, then what causes me is the cause of my conduct; responsibility, therefore, falls back upon the cause, and as the chain of causes is endless, responsibility must be put indefinitely far back." To this we answer: It is quite true that we are responsible only for that which we cause. If a man has been forced by another to make a motion which occasions injury—if he did not will to bring it about—the responsibility falls not upon him but upon the other; not he, but the other, is the object

of punishment or blame. But also for what has been brought about, not through his character, but through an utterance of free arbitrariness, a man cannot be made responsible, because volition without motive nullifies accountability. Likewise merit pre-supposes physical freedom ; if a deed which had useful consequences did not spring from a man's will, we could not infer from it a man's virtue. Some persons have said that the doctrine of uniformity assumes, in fact, that a man is forced to his action, that he is forced by his character. But this remark makes no sense ; for my character is not something separate from myself. To act according to one's nature is the opposite of being forced. Would we be responsible, would we possess merit or virtue, if we did not act according to our character ?

It goes without saying that we are responsible only for what we cause. But how will anyone justify the statement that we are not responsible if we ourselves are caused ? It may be that, besides ourselves, also what has caused us can be rendered accountable ; but that we shall not be responsible simply because we have come into the world, and have grown up, not by accident or miracle, but in a natural way, is a wholly unfounded statement. And, pray, how much would our responsibility be heightened if our character were accidental and without a cause ? Our character is what it is, and it does not become better or worse whether it has arisen naturally or supernaturally, whether it has been created out of nothing, or out of causes. Our responsibility and imputability would not in reality be heightened, but would cease to exist, if our native character were the work of accident. For from the circumstance that our native qualities did not come under the law of cause and effect we should have to infer that character in general is exempt from that law, and, therefore, cannot be influenced by praise and reward, or blame and punishment.

From all that has been said, it is clear that the feeling of responsibility for what we do includes nothing which contradicts the doctrine of causal connection among the phenomena of human

life. Our consciousness of guilt, of accountability and responsibility, is the consciousness that our punishment, whether by the State, by society, or by conscience, would be just. But this consciousness would vanish if we believed that our act did not spring from our character, but was the work of arbitrary choice ; for such conduct could not be imputed to us. But if anyone says that responsibility assumes the possibility of having acted otherwise, and therefore of freedom, it is quite correct ; responsibility assumes physical freedom, the power to do otherwise if we will to do otherwise. But it does not assume that under the same outer and inner circumstances the action could have been different ; on the contrary, were this so, there would be no such thing as responsibility.

(6.) *The Consciousness of the Law of Cause and Effect.*

The recognition of the universality of cause and effect has nothing in common with fatalism. The superstitious notion of a fate, destiny, doom, to which a man is subject, necessarily arose often in times of meagre scientific and social culture. When a man stands over against the processes of nature, ignorant and helpless—if they go on without his knowing their causes, and without his being able to master them—and if, at the same time, he thinks himself dependent upon an unapproachable earthly power, in the presence of which he is helpless, and which at any moment can inflict every evil upon him, he easily acquires the belief that in nature a mysterious being rules, which has determined beforehand all events, or all that greatly touch his life, and will bring them about no matter what he may do. Fatalism is the notion that man's destiny is determined by a power outside of man, and that the human will has no influence upon the course of his life. "Destiny leads the willing, it drags the unwilling." If it is determined that I shall die, the fatalist thinks, then I shall die in spite of all regulations I may make ; but if it is determined that I shall not die, then I shall remain living however imprudently or rashly I may act. Inactivity or action without deliberation,

according to the momentary impulse, is regarded by the fatalist as the practical consequence to be drawn from his belief. Logical it is not. The fatalist says: "It is already supplied what will happen and what will befall me." It may be so, we reply to him, but you do not know what will happen. You find out only when it does happen. You think that you prepare for yourself the greatest possible quiet and comfort through inactivity, and by a life according to the impulse of the moment, but thereby you contradict your own doctrine, according to which you can exercise no influence upon the course of your future. Whether you remain inactive or not, whether you follow your sensuous impulses or not, whether you act with or without deliberation, it is all one and the same according to your doctrine: that will happen which must happen. From fatalism no proper consequence can be drawn. "There is for mortals," as the chorus in Sophokles' *Antigone* says, "never any deliverance from pre-determined necessity."

Opponents have said that our doctrine is in reality fatalism. For it declares, so they think, that everything that has happened, is happening, or will happen, takes place necessarily, that no act can be otherwise, must be exactly so, that everything is subject to eternal and unchangeable laws. Such an act foreknown by an all-wise spirit for all time, cannot, they say, deserve the name of action. If a disciple of our theory, say our opponents, should believe in the practical utility of science, he would be simply inconsequent; for our doctrine reduces man to the mere part of a spectator. All effort toward the perfecting of himself or others is put an end to by the fatalism of our theory, so they say. To all this the following is to be said in reply. Our doctrine is, that human volition has causes and effects; fatalism is the doctrine that human volition has no effects, or at least none that touch a man's destiny. The insight that in all events of the world's history inorganic as well as organic, and animal as well as human, an unbroken connection exists, that in particular the actions of men are the effects of motives which act uniformly is far removed from fatalism. This latter regards as certain and necessary the happening of some effects; but the knowledge that in order to

bring these about a line of natural causes and effects is indispensable is totally lacking in it ; fatalism is rather of the opinion that if an event which has been determined by fate were not to be brought about by natural causes, then that mysterious something, fate, by immediate intervention, would set it going. In recognising the unlimited applicability of the laws of cause and effect, our doctrine declares that every event, even of the action of men, is an object of scientific study, which discovers causes and effects. Here our opponents convert the truth into its opposite. It is they who deny that human life can be an object of scientific investigation ; it is they who put in question the practical significance and usefulness of science, inasmuch as they deny the universality of cause and effect. They are the fatalists, for according to the doctrine of chance, as well as to that of destiny, we have no influence in determining our future moral life. Our doctrine, on the other hand, gives us confidence and trust in human energy by saying to us that all events are both causes and effects, that nothing which happens is without consequences, that in the chain of causes and effects the will is a link, and, indeed, the link most important in deciding a man's destiny, that a man's lot in great part depends upon himself, and that every man is the architect of his own fortune. The man makes the destiny. Our theory says to him that "every feeling, every resolution, adds a stone in the building of human character." The opinion that human volition is in vain in case there is no break in the chain of cause and effect, would be correct if volition itself were not a link in that chain. It is not our theory, but the opposite, which places volition outside the natural connection of cause and effect, and thereby makes it a matter of indifference. Human efforts are existing events, causes of effects, just as they are effects of causes. To think that we cannot influence the course of things in case these stand in causal connection, is the same as thinking that if our organs are in a healthy condition it is in vain to will to open our eyes in order to see in case an inseparable connection exists between the will to open our eyes and the actual opening of them in daylight and the actual seeing. If things did not stand in causal

connection, then we should not indeed be able to influence them.

After all that has been said, we need not lose a word more about the loose way in which the word "necessity" is used by those who call our doctrine fatalism. Furthermore, the statement that action would not deserve the name of action if it could be foreknown and predicted, has about as much sense as the statement that to fly or to see does not deserve to be called flying or seeing if it can be predicted. Does it belong to the definition of action that it is incalculable and accidental? When we examined how to judge of an action we considered the points which are the distinguishing marks of action; but chance or arbitrariness did not come up. If action were not caused, it would not be an action, because it would not be the work of self-determination. To an all-knowing mind, everything, including our future action, would be foreknown; I have not such knowledge, I only know that everything which will happen will be brought about by natural causes. But from the fact that everything which will happen will take place by necessity (in the logical sense of the word), it does not follow that I shall necessarily be bad or unhappy, just as little as it follows that I shall be necessarily good or happy: but I know simply that if I am bad, and my character does not change in the meantime for the better, I shall act badly; and if I am good, and my character in the meantime does not change for the worse, I shall act well, and that if I do right I shall feel moral joy, and if I do wrong, moral suffering. Finally, if anyone says that the doctrine of uniformity in human action is fatalistic, because it places conduct under the laws of nature, he forgets that laws are not independent entities outside of the facts themselves, but are only rules built up by us which express in a proposition the uniformities of facts, and, therefore, facts do not obey laws, but laws obey facts.

Fatalism does not follow from a knowledge of the causal connection of events. In reality, what influence does this knowledge have upon human consciousness?

Many have said that it puts an end to the sense of responsibilities, that it prevents us from praising or blaming any longer, that it causes remorse to vanish, that it makes moral judgment impossible. To understand everything, means to excuse everything. But we have seen that moral conceptions have as their pre-supposition the universal validity of the law of cause and effect, while they are nullified by the doctrine of chance.

Action from the side of the emotions, and action from the side of understanding, are two quite different processes, which can in no wise come in conflict with each other. The emotions react, so to speak, upon the consideration of deeds and qualities of character with definite feelings; understanding deliberates as to the causes of conduct and character. These two processes never come into contradiction, any more than enjoyment of the fragrance of a rose and scientific speculation as to the chemical combination which causes the fragrance; and yet we must admit, of course, that the human mind can concentrate itself at any given time upon one operation, and, therefore, cannot feel strongly while it is speculating scientifically. The causal explanation of the phenomenon is not a justification of it; it implies neither that the phenomenon has worth, nor that it is worthless. A bad disposition does not begin to appear good the moment we discover that it has been inherited from father or mother; it does not on that account cease to do harm.

Our doctrine constrains us to meditate upon human conduct, but while one is meditating one cannot feel strongly; and the oftener one meditates the oftener are the feelings forced into the background. To meditate upon the deed means not simply to retain it in mind, but to go back to its causes, and to trace out its consequences; and if the deed is worthy of blame we shall be able through deliberation to discover that the blame attaches not simply to the one who does the deed, but also to those who are the cause of his bad disposition. Moral emotion spreads itself beyond its immediate object to a wider sphere, and in so doing loses a part of its violence. Thus our doctrine assuages the passions which relate to past conduct. This is the kernel of truth which

lies in the words: "To understand a thing means to excuse it." But our doctrine does not weaken all feelings; it makes milder hate, vengeance, detestation, in short, all feelings of animosity which for a time disturb the peace of the soul; but in so doing it quickens love for mankind which slumbers in the spirit of every developed human being. Sympathy and care for others it introduces in the place of hate and vengeance. This influence of our doctrine upon the emotional life is in the highest degree beneficial.

It also tones down the excessive violence of regret at the thought of our own past transgressions; and herein is its influence wholesome, for remorse may easily lead to despair and self-destruction; but our doctrine does not weaken the feeling so much that it cannot accomplish its task of spurring a man on to do better. As our sorrow for the evil in human conduct is assuaged by the knowledge that conduct is conditioned by causes, likewise our suffering at the thought of the evils of existence becomes less intense when we perceive their necessity. "In proportion as the mind regards all things as necessity," says Spinoza, "it has a greater power over its emotions, or suffers less from them." Universal evils are actual, but they do not arise from the will of a conscious being, they cannot therefore be an object of anger. They are here, they are brought about necessarily by the constitution of the world, which, nevertheless, as a whole, is an object of delight. This insight furnishes us consolation and quiets our unrest.

When we meditate upon conduct we do not simply go back to its causes, but also search out its consequences. The most important are the effects upon the life, efficiency of function, and happiness of mankind. Deeds which further or hinder these must awaken strong feelings in every one who loves mankind. While the wide outlook which our doctrine constrains us to make diminishes the pain which the thought of the past occasions, it augments the total energy of the feelings which are associated with the future. Although it is true that we cannot feel strongly while we are deliberating, nevertheless, after the deliberation is



ended which arrives at a result important for the future, a strong feeling may set in ; and the oftener important results are attained by deliberation upon human affairs, so much the oftener will strong emotions be aroused. But feelings which are preceded by longer processes of reasoning will not have, for the most part, the passionate violence of immediate impulses, but will exercise a quieter, although by no means a less strong activity.

We investigate the consequences of the conduct of others as well as of ourselves. The thought of the fatal consequences of other persons' actions prevents our blame or punishment from becoming too mild, by summoning us not to be milder than we dare. The thought of the natural consequences of our own doing leads to a wiser and more earnest kind of conduct. Whoever has clearly recognised that no deed is without motives, will appeal in a reasonable way to a man's motives if he wishes to induce him to do a certain deed ; and if he perceives that he cannot awaken any, or at least adequate, motives for the deed, he will not make the attempt. In consequence, he will escape many disappointments, and will more seldom get angry with his fellow-men, and will in general be more kindly disposed and act more efficiently. But far more important, and morally more significant, is the influence which our theory exercises by making us think of the lasting consequences of our conduct.

There is a law of the conservation of energy also in the moral world. Everyone may appropriate to himself Faust's words :

" Not in æons can the traces disappear  
Of my days on earth ! "

What a powerful sanction does this thought give to our conduct, what an earnest, exalted significance to our lives ! How it elevates our self-consciousness, how it quickens our sense of creative responsibility ! How like a conqueror of death does this thought of selfless immortality assert itself !

Nothing is ever lost. The consequences of our act cannot be annihilated. When once a deed is done, it no longer belongs to us, it spreads its influence in ever widening waves through all

eternity. "Our deeds," says George Eliot, "are like children that are born to us, they live and act apart from our own will. Nay, children may be strangled, but deeds never: they have an indestructible life both in and out of our consciousness." Our deeds have in reality an indestructible life in our consciousness. Our existence does not consist of a row of unconnected moments, as the doctrine of chance represents it, and we do not at every new moment begin afresh; yesterday insists upon guiding to-day, and to-day will not let to-morrow alone; our life has continuity and solidity; every part of it is under the influence of the past and influences what follows. The past has sown, the future reaps good or evil. "The least step into villany or baseness," says Shaftesbury, "changes the character and value of a life;" and the same thing is true of the smallest good deed. Every good deed makes easier future deeds of the same kind; they prepare the way for better ones, they give us joyful self-confidence and thereby heighten our moral energy. But a bad deed makes better conduct more difficult; it often hangs over the one who has done it like a fatality, it forces him ever further down the road of evil. There may not ever be an opportunity of returning again. "Our deeds determine us just as much as we determine them. In our deeds there is a terrible energy, which can make of an honest man first a deceiver, then cause him to adapt his nature to his change, because deception, after the first evil deed has been committed, presents itself as the only possible escape, and as the thing which from now on is best. . . . Europe, men say, adapts itself to whatever condition it is in; the same is true of the individual man." And not only do all deeds tend to perpetuate their quality in succeeding acts, but the doing of many trifling bad deeds makes ready the inflammable stuff which when certain external conditions are favourable, may with apparent suddenness burst into a very conflagration of evil.

Not only our actions, but also our feelings and thoughts have in us their endless consequences. Hence the commandment: Desire not what is not right, but be watchful and true!

But all our acts, and feelings, and thoughts, extend their influence

beyond ourselves to others. Whoever neglects his own physical or mental health may thereby injure posterity. "The iniquity of the father is visited upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them." But whoever perfects himself physically, mentally, or morally, blesses his child, and his child's children. The influence of our conduct is, in the strictest sense of the word, immeasurable; it extends in all directions and to all distances. How this thought must lift up and bring gladness to a righteous man! Can any other exalt more the inviolability of our moral obligation!

Perhaps only one other: The thought that only we alone can bring about justice in the world! The cosmic powers outside of us do not make our ideals real. If mankind, as the totality of self-conscious creatures, does not help itself, no one helps it. If we will not help our brothers, no one will. Neither the gods nor time will help them. John Morley has well said: "Progress is not automatic, in the sense that if we were all to be cast into a deep slumber for the space of a generation, we should awake to find ourselves in a greatly improved state." The world only grows better, even in the moderate degree in which it does, because people wish that it should and take the right steps to make it better. There is not only a growing and blooming, there is also a dying out of races; not only a progress, but also a retrogression and extinction of peoples. Each one of us can help to prevent mankind from dying out, and, on the contrary, help it to live and bloom into greater perfection. Each one of us bears a part of the responsibilities.

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Let us sum up this chapter. To be responsible means to answer to a charge. Responsibility includes chargeability, and, so far as the charge cannot be removed, punishability. According to the kind of punishment responsibility is social, judicial, or moral. Closely related to these notions is the conception of accountability, it is the referring of the action back to its origin-

ator. Accountability is such a state of mind in the doer of the deed as makes him a suitable object of punishment, if he transgresses the rules of the state or of morals ; to be not accountable indicates such characteristics or conditions as bar out punishment. And the punishment is in all cases to be barred out, in which it does not fulfil its purpose, in which it does not have the good effect of preventing greater evils. Punishment is justifiable, and therefore responsibility and accountability exist, only on condition that the law of cause and effect holds good in human action, and infliction of evils which cannot prevent greater evils, would be wrong. Punishment, it must be conceded, developed originally out of the desire for revenge ; but its moral justification does not lie in the satisfaction it gives to a desire, but in its being the necessary means of checking greater evils.

If deeds were not the consequence of character, there would be no pain or pleasure of conscience ; they would not be an index to a man's character. Neither could they be an object of praise or blame, we could not infer from them the purposes, motives, or character, and praise and blame could not improve or encourage. And at the same time we should have also to give up the conceptions of merit and guilt : for to have merit means to be a suitable object of praise, to be guilty means to be an object of blame and punishment. Moral desert is virtue proved through deeds, and virtues are good dispositions of the will in the acquirement of which praise and blame are a help. The man who recognises the universal validity of cause and effect is from nothing further removed than from fatalism. This is the notion that a man's will is without effect upon his destiny ; but we have seen that it is one of the deciding factors. The recognition of cause and effect as a universal relation assuages our feelings of hatred, vengeance, and scorn, while it fills us with kindness even toward the criminal. We learn how powerful external circumstances are, especially social institutions ; and our indignation is directed, not so much toward the criminal, as toward the defects of the social order which makes men criminals ; and we try, as far as possible, to set aside this disorder. Our feelings toward the future are strengthened

by recognising that present deeds necessarily affect the destiny of mankind. This same knowledge preserves us from the error of being too mild in our blame and punishment of others ; it increases the sense of our responsibilities, and gives us courage and patience in our struggle with misery and evil ; but leads us to a more serious treatment of ourselves. Our deeds have their consequences also in ourselves. Jesus warns us : " Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin," and Ben Asai says : " Exercise every virtue and flee from every sin : for a virtue draws others after it, and a sin draws others after it ; the reward of virtue is virtue, and the reward of sin is sin." These words apply not only to the influence of our action upon ourselves, but also to its influence upon others : the reward of our virtue is also in the virtue of others.

But if, as we have seen, the consciousness of cause and effect must heighten the sense of responsibility, what is it which has led so many persons to just the opposite opinion ? It was in part a confusion of thought due to the double meaning of such words as " can," " must," " possible," " necessary ;" in part it was due to theology, the influence of which upon morals we will now examine.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### ETHICS AND THEOLOGY.

“Not religion as a duty, but duty as a religion.”—FELIX ADLER.

#### (I.) *The Will of God as the Foundation of Morals.*

EVEN in these days one often hears it said that religion is the basis of morality. If this were true, we might well be apprehensive for the future of the human race: for it is a fact that religious belief in all civilised societies is diminishing in proportion as the sciences advance. But our whole preceding investigation has exhibited the groundlessness of the statement that morality rests upon religion: we have nowhere found it necessary to bring the doctrine of religion to the support of the propositions of morality. But let us look away from this proof, and subject the doctrine of the independence of ethics to a more special and searching proof.

We hear men say that morality is based upon religion. What does “morality” mean here, and what “religion”? We cannot well be mistaken if we say that by morality is understood conscientious, just conduct, and by religion belief in a personal God and in the immortality of the soul. Therefore, the statement we are to examine declares, if we are to give it a clear and definite meaning: Conscientious, upright conduct rests on a belief in a personal God, and in the immortality of the soul.

It may well be admitted, since the research of Hume and Kant, and it is generally conceded in the scientific world, that the existence of a personal God and the immortality of the soul cannot be proved. But let us for the present start with the supposition

that a higher personal being exists who has our fate in his power, and has given us certain commandments. Still, the question will even then arise, why ought we to carry out these, his commandments?

If some powerful tyrant commands a man to do this or that, something perhaps against the man's conscience, if the tyrant promises rich reward in case his order be fulfilled, and threatens fearful torture if it be disregarded, is obedience moral? Is slavish fear before a mighty tyrant something noble and good? "All these things will I give thee if thou wilt fall down and worship me," is what, according to the Bible, the tempter said to the Son of Man. Would the worship of the devil be a moral act? Now, why is it represented as a bad thing to follow the will of a Satan, and as good to follow the will of God? Simply because Satan is bad and God is good. Not because God is a powerful being, who has our weal or woe in his hands, is it right to obey his word; for the devil is also regarded to be such a being, and every unworthy despot is one who has power over men, and can cause them misery; it is not held to be a virtue to submit one's self to a powerful wicked being; but because God is good it is right to obey his will—because God commands what is right, God's will is *good*: but what does this mean? We evidently intend by it to define more closely the divine will. When we praise God on account of his justice, goodness, and wisdom, we wish to declare certain characteristics of him: in so doing, we admit that they signify something of themselves, for otherwise we use words without sense. "If one attaches no meaning to the words 'good,' and 'just,' and 'right,'" says Archbishop Whately, "except that such is the divine command, then to say that God is good, and his commands just, is only saying in a circuitous way that he is what he is, and that what he wills, he wills, which might equally be said of any being in the universe."

If it is to be good, if it is to be a matter of duty, and not simply of selfish shrewdness, to obey God's will, then God must be good, then his will must be directed toward the good; and this, again, presupposes that the good is something in itself without reference

to the fact that God wills it. What makes that personal ruler of the world, in which the believer trusts, a divinity and not an Ahriman is, in a word, his moral qualities. And whosoever denies that these in themselves have a meaning, robs God of his moral attributes. We must already have recognised moral distinctions if we are to declare God to be good, and to assert that it is moral to obey him.

In a civilised community believers generally admit that it means something in and of itself, to designate anything as right and good. They boast of the pure morality of their religion when they compare it with other religions; and, in so far, they submit the various religions to the moral standard as to a supreme judge. And especially, if we turn to the Christian gospel, we shall find that it already presupposes moral distinctions in general, and only urges the carrying out of the rules of right. "Whatever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report, if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things."

But while it may be conceded that some acts are good or bad independently of God's will, and that the bad ones of this class are not bad because they are forbidden, but are forbidden because they are bad, still it may be contended that other acts are bad only because God orders or forbids them. This distinction, however, is untenable.

The upright man follows a divine command, the goodness and wisdom of which he does not perceive, because he is convinced that God, the all-perfect being, could command only what is wise and good. From God's moral attributes in general he infers the morality of this single command, just as from the character of a wise and good man whom he knows he infers that any special precept which this man follows must be wise and good, although he may not see its wisdom. In the one case, as in the other, he believes that reasons which would justify the precept are at hand, if one but had the necessary insight to find them out.

One of the most important facts which historic study has



secured is, that the earliest religions do not stand in any relation to morality; originally the gods maintained an attitude of indifference toward the moral side of human conduct. The moral ideas have developed in the social life of man, and in it have their roots: only afterwards and gradually were they set up into connection with the gods. This one circumstance proves that morality is independent of religion. Even Christian theologians have brought it forward as something remarkable that men who were capable through pure reason of determining the essence of virtue, as is to be seen in the heathen systems of ethics, were nevertheless not led to recognise the practice of virtue as the surest means of pleasing the gods, but have regarded as the surest, such actions as had no moral worth or were positively corrupt. Morality was just that which transformed the religious ideas. How often the gods stood on a lower moral level than the men of the time who were most respected for their character! Flattering names which were given the gods in order not to offend them, such as the most just, the most holy, must not mislead us, as it all depends upon what was really believed to be the doings of the gods. Men have often had great difficulty in improving the morals of the gods whom they have inherited from their cruder forefathers:

And since morality does not have its root in religious beliefs, it is not remarkable that the greatest differences of morality and immorality are found along with the same religious ideas, and that on the other hand the same moral ideas and the same grades of morality exist alongside of very different, even hostile, religions.

But let us turn away once for all from these objections to the supposition that morality rests on God's will, and ask ourselves: How are we, even after we accept his will as the basis, to find out what his will is?

That God does not now speak directly to us is quite generally conceded, therefore there are only two ways of discovering his will: we must try to find it out by observing nature and ourselves, or else we must fall back upon a supernatural revelation. The first alternative we will examine later, at present we must bring

before our attention only the second, which is taken for granted in all widely-spread religions.

In considering the idea of a supernatural revelation we must not forget that to-day, even many believers in God deny the possibility or the actuality, or the conceivability of such a thing, and therefore stand outside the circle of those for whom a system of ethics built upon revelation has weight.

But let us then admit that God's will has been declared in a supernatural revelation. And immediately the question arises: in which? for, as a matter of fact, there are many religious proclamations set up as revelations. The Christians hold theirs as the only genuine one, but so do the Mohammedans, and so do the Buddhists, and if we start from any one of these revelations we do not receive a universal human morality, but only that of a given religion, a Christian, or a Mohammedan, or a Buddhistic morality, every one of which stands by itself, and has no application to the followers of other religions. And if we take the special Christian scriptures as the basis we get a peculiar Christian morality as a chapter in Christian theology. But then arises the new question: which confession of faith ought we to follow, the Roman Catholic, the Greek Catholic, the Lutheran, the Reformed, or what other? For these churches differ in respect to many points in ethics. If we want to know what is right and what is wrong we must therefore finally apply to the respective priesthoods. If we go back directly to the New Testament we shall discover that these documents presuppose an already existing morality, and confirm the same only in certain details and emphasize them but do not attempt to build up a complete system. We find many precepts which clash, yes, sometimes contradict each other; a great deal requires an elaborate explanation; in some cases it is a question whether we are to give literal or only figurative interpretation in order to decide between passages which conflict. A higher principle is needed; this, therefore, must be based on something else. Bishop Cumberland said: "The surest and often the only sign that a law is of God, is that the execution of it furthers the happiness of mankind; only on this

ground could it be declared of a God that his essence was love." But if we have once found such a principle as the happiness of mankind, we could derive from it all the rules of morality, and do not any longer need a revelation. The Golden Rule of the gospels : "Whatsoever you would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them," is a maxim of the highest practical value, but as the highest criterion of morals, it could have no significance whatever ; as it requires itself a closer definition and limitation. A man often wishes that others should do for him what is not right. Also the rule, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" cannot in this form pass as the supreme moral commandment, for to love yourself is only a vague expression, since we can really love only others ; but if this expression means to care for our own welfare, then the true moral commandment requires that we love mankind more than ourselves, inasmuch as we must subordinate our own welfare to that of mankind. The true and proper contents of the injunction to love our neighbour as ourself, is identical with the commandment to further the welfare of mankind. But in order to set up this commandment we do not need to go back to a revelation.

To this must be added that there have been delivered to us not one group of holy scripture unchanged through the centuries, always and everywhere recognised as authority ; but that theologians have been of various opinions as to the genuineness of many passages and of whole books. Ought we not to make morality independent of what decision critics may come to as to the text of a book ?

## *(2.) Immortality as the Foundation of Morals.*

Men have often admitted that God's will is not a principle of morality in the sense that out of it could be derived the contents of moral precepts. We must first know what is right, in order to know what his will is ; as we only know that God wills the right. But men have maintained that the divine will is still an indispensable foundation for morality, inasmuch as he alone inspires us

with motives to carry out, in our conduct, that which in another way we have recognized as right and good.

But what kinds of motives, then, are these to be? Why should we, through the thought that God wills it, be induced to do what is right? Because in the midst of the dangers and temptations of this life, in order to keep ourselves in the path of duty, we need the prospect of eternal life which God has promised them who believe on him and do his commandments. This is the answer which is generally given us by believers. As is generally the case, it is intended by this answer to express the idea that man is capable of doing his duty only for the sake of reward, only out of self-interest; at the bottom of it lies a low selfish conception of what is moral, which is in contradiction to the convictions of many of the noblest and best men, who believe that in its very essence virtue is disinterested, and not only an affair of far-sighted shrewdness. This religious virtue which craves a reward, and accordingly which looks upon conscientiousness as a burden that a man might hope to throw away after his death, is degraded and unworthy.

A glance suffices, however, to disprove the doctrine that man can be induced to do right only out of hope of future reward, and the fear of future punishment. We know that one of the best of men, Socrates, was in doubt as to the continuance of life after death. Aristotle and Spinoza did not believe in immortality, in the sense in which the Christian understands it, and Frederic the Great, Lichtenberg, Hume and Bentham, believed that death was the absolute end of all life. And these men were great and good. But, in truth, countless men and women are of the conviction that the obligation to do right is direct and immediate, and does not come through the round-about way of heaven and hell. That for the sake of men, men are to abstain from all wilful injury and to do good; not for God's sake, not for a future reward, or to avoid future punishment. "Whence," says Maudsley, "were drawn in the past the inspirations of the sublimest deeds of heroism and of self-sacrifice even to the laying down of life? Not from supernatural but from natural sources. Not from any

expectation of recompense in a future life, but as a simple act of pagan devotion to country or to kind, and oftentimes in the calm assurance that the sacrifice was the end of all, was the supreme sacrifice made by patriot or by hero ; and we may be sure that in time to come, whatever views may be entertained of the supernatural, mankind will continue to find within itself the natural sources of the like fanatical inspirations."

It is indisputable that the enthusiasm which "burns in some breasts to the glow of the purest self-sacrifice at the present day, and alone promises to glow with more general fervour in the future, is the enthusiasm of humanity. It is humanity, or that portion of it from which he is sprung and in which he lives and moves and has his being, that is the inspiration, and the guide, and the providence of the individual."

We must remember that to risk our life is in itself nothing noble ; the purpose in our so doing decides as to its moral worth. No one risks his life more than the savage or the criminal. To continue life under all persecutions might be a greater martyrdom than to die, since to live under certain circumstances is harder than dying.

The influence of belief in immortality upon the conduct of man has often been over-estimated, inasmuch as perspective in time has not been borne in mind. In proportion as a condition of pain or joy appears distant, an impression which the idea of it makes upon the feelings is weak. And this general fact holds good in an especially high degree in the case of those who most need a strengthening of their moral impulses ; furthermore it is exactly such persons who are disposed to regard the observance of outward forms of worship as the best way to save their souls. Surely the worth of religion as a supplement to human laws, a shrewd kind of police force, a deputy of the detective, is not very high. If we observe the conduct of believers under circumstances where the commandments of religion are not supported by the civil laws and public opinion, or where, as for example in respect to duelling in many states, the social contradicts the religious

sanction, we perceive that with many believers the religious motive is weak and helpless.

But if the conceptions of heaven and hell really make a strong impression upon a man's feelings, they could easily produce a selfish kind of disposition; personal interest is with many believers the ruling motive; although they do not hope in this world, but in another, to receive their reward, they are egotists just as much as if they were unbelievers; genuine benevolence and a disinterested sense of duty cannot compete in their soul with their own individual well-being. "Does not the human heart contain immediate moral precepts, and in order to be moved in accordance with them, must the machinery of another world be applied to man?" So asks Immanuel Kant, a man who, as a priest of the society of Jesus says, "more than any other has contributed scientifically to destroy the theocratic character in science and in life." "Could he be really honest, could he be called really virtuous," asked Kant, "who would gladly give himself up to his favourite vices if he feared no future punishment, and must one not rather say that he indeed shuns the practice of evil, but nourishes in his soul a vicious disposition; that he loves the advantage of conduct seemingly virtuous, while he hates virtue itself?" And in fact experience also teaches that many who are taught and convinced of a future world, at the same time give themselves up to vices and low-mindedness, and only bethink themselves of means whereby to ward off the threatening consequences of the future. And Schiller says in reference to his poem *Resignation*: "Its contents is a man's demand for another world, because he has given up the good things of time for the good things of eternity, because he has resigned enjoyment in the world. In alarm he finds that he has been deceived in his calculation, and that a false passport for eternity has been given him. Thus it may and should be with every virtue which is practised merely because good wages are expected in return in another life. Our moral duties do not bind by contract, but are unconditional. Virtues which are practised simply over against certificates for future advantages are worthless. Virtue is an inward necessity,

although there may be no other life than this. The poem, therefore, is not an attack upon true virtue; but upon that religious virtue which forms a contract with the Creator and puts out good actions at interest."

In many cases men have without doubt been better morally than they thought they were; they might fancy that nothing but belief in immortality kept them in the path of duty, while in reality the doing of right, as such, made them happy, and this immediate satisfaction rendered them able to withstand the temptations of the world. But undoubtedly the notion that a man cannot live uprightly without believing in immortality often has had a pernicious influence. The habit of falling back on that belief at all times of temptation could only have the effect of gradually weakening the direct motives toward the right and the good which are thereby rendered inactive, and the man ultimately is able to stand only upon those crutches. But, now, if a man's confidence in that belief is shattered, everything will begin to topple which had only that belief for its support, and will fall to pieces when that support falls.

How easily one may come to waver in the belief in immortality! Let us bring before our mind the process of thought of those who do not believe in the continuation of the soul after death. Consciousness they think—the sensations, feelings, impulses, presuppositions, thoughts, in short, all states of mind, are not matter, and are not similar to matter; consciousness is not a thing but a process; and the unity of a conscious being is, so it appears to them, not that of an atom but of a process of life which includes interaction of changes, and which has a beginning and an end. The phenomena of life and consciousness are the opposite of a substance; they are not enduring and permanent, but are always being brought forth anew, in truth they are the most transitory and vanishing of all processes. But conditions of consciousness are neither material stuff nor mechanical forces, neither are they casual phenomena floating in the air or proceeding out of nothing, but are connected with definite material processes. Mental life is not only something which sprang into being, insomuch as it ap-

appears at a certain stage of development of the embryo after a condition which is not accompanied with consciousness ; but it is in general something which is produced every moment ; and if it is to be preserved as a continual flame, definite physiological processes must continually be at hand. In the course of life it apparently experiences periodic interruptions in deep sleep, so that the play of consciousness daily begins anew ; and to these regular interruptions others may be added, such as conditions of fainting ; while the disposition to return to consciousness remains as long as the basis of consciousness is not destroyed, or is only slightly changed. But now is there any scientific probability that when the whole organism ceases to exist, consciousness will not be extinguished, that death is not a real death but only an appearance of death ?

The phenomena of the mental life develop in an exact parallel with those of the organic life. The human mind comes into being at the same time as the human body ; in childhood the imperfection of the mind corresponds to that of the body, in manhood the energy of the one to that of the other, and in old age gradually the mental life dies away with the physical life. The inference is that very close with the cessation of the latter the former also comes to an end. The organs of the body are likewise those of the mind : the organs of the mind return to dust ; and what is a man without organs ? Diseases of the brain have as a consequence diseases of the mind, and if certain injuries to the action of the brain are cured the mental disturbances again disappear. We can in animals destroy groups of the mental phenomena of life, by cutting away certain parts of the brain ; no one doubts that the same holds good of men. Can we avoid the conclusion that with the destruction of the whole brain the whole mental life ceases ? The consciousness of animals is fundamentally similar to that of men : are animals also immortal ? But if the animals are mortal and men are descended from the lower animals, are men then immortal ?

Most of the reasons which are given for immortality would prove an existence prior to death as well as a continuance after,



as in general that which is imperishable in nature did not come into being. But in civilised countries to-day almost no one believes in a pre-existence. Schopenhauer says: "That a thing which did not exist for an endless period of time, should continue for all eternity, is a most rash assumption. If I came into being and was created for the first time at my birth out of nothing, then there is the highest probability that at death I shall again return to nothing. Endless continuance *a parte post* and nothingness *a parte ante* do not go together. Only that which originally is eternal and uncreated can be indestructible." And Lichtenberg says: "'After our life it will be as it was before.'—This is the instinctive conception prior to all reasoning. We cannot prove it, but for me, when it is taken in connection with other circumstances, such as fainting, it has an irresistible force, and it has also probably for many men who will not confess it. No single argument has convinced me of the contrary. My opinion is natural, the other is artificial, and everything contradicts it as strongly as anything can be contradicted."

Sometimes the strong wish to live eternally, which so many men have, has been brought forward as a proof of the immortality of the soul. But do men not have countless wishes which remain unsatisfied? Still more passionately than for her own immortality a mother often wishes that her sick child may be permitted to live on this earth; nevertheless all her hot tears and prayers, all her storm of feeling and despair, cannot keep the child alive.

Probably not many will be induced by what we have said to accept the mortality of man. But ought they not to admit that perhaps their belief in immortality is erroneous? Although they, at the same time, may entertain the hope of immortality, should they not be morally bound not to build up the moral life of themselves and others upon so uncertain a foundation? Goethe believed in the life after death, but in his ethics this belief played no rôle; likewise the moral theories of the ancient Greeks were independent of it.

*(3.) One's Own Death.*

The reason for maintaining the belief in the immortality of the soul as the indispensable support of morality, is not always the one which presupposes selfishness as the ruling motive in every human being ; many have thought that it would be unendurable, and break down all courage, all hope, all striving after what is high and noble, even to entertain the thought that our individual life should sometime cease to exist, for then our whole life would be a waste, empty and meaningless.

But is the influence of the doctrine of immortality upon the emotions really so favourable a one? Certainly in countless cases this doctrine has brought consolation in times of suffering, and quiet in the midst of danger, and has made easier the departure from loved ones and from life ; but who counts the cases in which it has destroyed a good man's life happiness, and made the final hour more difficult for him ? There are sanguine souls who, in spite of an enormous number of sins, still flatter themselves with the hope that in the summing up of their life there will be found an excess of good over evil, and they regard this as sufficient for the attainment of perpetual blessedness. But there are also more earnest minds, which at every transgression fear that the salvation of their soul has been endangered. They indeed do not know according to what measure it has been meted out to them. Let us suppose that our destiny is decided by lot, and that among a hundred chances there is one which means a life-long painful illness. Will not this possibility of becoming unhappy for a lifetime put us into a disquietude ? And yet the probability of our drawing this unhappy lot is only one chance in a hundred ! Alban Stolz was certainly a man of worthy character, but we see in his biography, that in his last days "his early suffering of anxiety for the salvation of his soul would not depart from him." And Luther says in his table talks: "Christians could easily suffer and overcome death, if they did not know that it was the wrath of God. This makes death bitter for us. But the heathen die with the sense of security, they neither see that fear of death is the

wrath of God, but they think it is the end of nature. The Epicureans say: 'It is to do only with a very short moment.' I, poor miserable man, could find little consolation in the suffering and resurrection of Christ, and in the forgiveness of sins." And as anxiety for his own soul can darken a believer's life and his hour of death, so can his anxiety lest his loved ones shall not enter the Kingdom of Heaven disturb him continually. We have this also to take into consideration, that for many men the thought of being compelled to live for ever is, on the whole, not stimulating but depressing.

But it is further to be borne in mind that even believers often are not perfectly sure in their hope of immortality. Many of them—and their number is increasing continually—know or fear that the continuation of life after death cannot be proved, perhaps that scientific probability is against it; and this circumstance must necessarily make a more or less deep impression upon the feelings. The fervent prayer for the restoration to health of a sick friend, the deep pain caused by his death, seem to show that the belief in a better world beyond does not shut out all doubt, the way believers really conduct themselves shows their real belief. But men require certainty concerning the things to which they commit their whole heart, and if they cannot attain this, their peace of mind must be disturbed.

"You hope for immortality;  
Can you the reasons name?  
Well, yes, the sovereign ground is this:  
We cannot live without the same."

Thus says Goethe. It is quite possible that this belief is necessary to an old man, after he has entertained it from his childhood on, and the limitation of his thought has long ago been fixed. But Goethe's word does not apply to man in general, the youthful mind is quite able to make friends with that thought, when it accustoms itself thereto. In fact there have been whole nations who have lived in happiness and peace without faith in immortality; with others it was just this thought of a life after death that disturbed their happiness, and they looked upon

deliverance from a life after death as a thing most to be striven after; frightful was the thought, not of death, but of not being able to die. Among that people of genius, the ancient Greeks, the idea of immortality played a very insignificant rôle; it was never a point of dogmatic assertion, and by many always denied without in general giving any offence to others. With the Greeks belief in a life after death by no means lifted men, on an average, to a higher level of happiness. Not an endless extension, but a beautiful and worthy close of life was the wish of the genuine Greek.

It is not right to give out anything as certain which we do not know; to let a human being from childhood clamour for something which perhaps is a fiction. It is not right to represent death to a child as something horrible, and to intensify the natural force of death by fancies. It is also neither wise nor just to keep the thought of death at a distance. Hufeland, the great physician and philanthropist, says: "How greatly do those deceive themselves who think to find a means against the fear of death by keeping out of mind the thought of death! Before they know it, in the midst of the merriest joy, the thought of it will suddenly rush upon them, and they will shudder so much the more terribly the more they are a stranger to it. I can regard only that man as happy, who has brought himself to the point of thinking of death in the midst of pleasure without being disturbed; and all may believe me when I say on the ground of experience that by frequently making ourselves acquainted with the idea, and by making less repulsive our conception of death, it can gradually be brought to be a matter of extreme indifference. . . . He alone who no longer fears death is free. There is nothing more which can enchain him or make him anxious or unhappy. His soul becomes filled with a high imperturbable spirit which even strengthens the vital energy and thereby becomes a positive means towards keeping death remote."

With frightful truthfulness Count Tolstoi in his story, "The Death of Ivan Ibitch," has brought before us the fact that only he who early in life makes his reconciliation with death can hope

to rejoice in his existence. Much which Tolstoi delineates there, he himself had lived, as appears in his "Confessions." He had counted almost fifty years when the thought of death with terrible force fell upon him and drove him irresistibly almost to suicide. "The horror of the darkness," he says, "was all too great, and I wished only quickly to be rid of it by means of a rope or a bullet." "Long ago, long ago, was the story told of a traveller who had fallen into a well. Below a snake—Death—waiting for my fall, in order to eat me up; I grasp at a twig, and cannot understand why this pain has come upon me. And this honey, which I had taken for my enjoyment, this honey delights me no more. But the white and the black mouse gnaw at the twig to which I hold. I clearly see the serpent—and no longer is the honey sweet to me. The former joy which deadened me to the horrors of the snake, deceives me no longer. Only one thing I see—the inevitable snake and the mouse, and I cannot turn my gaze away from them." Thus speaks the great Russian poet, who too late had made himself familiar with the thought of death. Early then let us listen to this appeal of Abraham a Sancta Clara: "Oh man, let it be said unto thee, let it be moaned unto thee, cry it out and write it out to all, to everything, everywhere: death must be, not perhaps, but surely! It is not certain when, it is not certain how, it is not certain where, but death itself is certain."

Death is certain, but there remains a consolation for us although death be our real end. Has not every period of life its own worth and is this diminished by the fact that each period at some time comes to an end? The life of a child has its worth, not only as a time of preparation for that of a grown-up man, as a means to an end, but it has in itself its own peculiar value. If the happy life of a child is annihilated we lament because we would have gladly seen it continue; but it has not on that account been in vain, in every moment it had its own worth in itself, and when a man has passed beyond the stage of childhood he is not accustomed, if the new period of his life satisfies him, to lament that the former has ended. The life of a young man or a maiden is precious in its own way; and in like manner grown-up

men and women do not complain that their former life is over, provided they only feel themselves happy in their present life. And also the life of an aged person has its peculiar value—although this does not imply that all sections of life have the same worth. The normal old age is not a time of decay; but is a period in which the attractions of life gradually lose their charm, and a desire for rest enters in.

If from a purely objective point of view we consider this characteristic of human life, we will not complain of it but accept it as something harmonious in itself and satisfactory. Because a thing does not last through an endless time is no proof that it has no worth; it has its worth as long as it lasts; not an endless elongation of the individual life we wish, but a rejuvenation of life by replacing the old individuals with new ones, a beginning again of the rhythm of childhood, youth, manhood, old age and death, as in nature it actually exists.

What would many a one desire if able to determine his own future? To be a child once more, then a youth or maiden, then a man or woman. But it is not his own life he would live, but another. But see! you have what you longed for, if you only stop your selfish yearning, if you become one in thought and feeling with humanity!

Would it then be better if there were no death? Let us for a moment suppose that men lived for ever, then mankind would soon have increased to such an extent, that a further multiplication would be a disadvantage to all. It would then be necessary that no more children be brought into the world, and only grown-up people would be found. All family life, the blessedness which men find in it, would cease. Now would that be a desirable condition of things?

"Life," says Goethe, "is the most beautiful invention of nature, and death is her trick of art to have much life." And a priest of the society of Jesus declares: "The grave makes the cradle possible, and we might almost say that out of death springs the fresh active life of youth which ceaselessly pulsates through the arteries of mankind." And Ludwig Feuerbach, the atheist,

full of love, and hope, and faith in mankind, says the same. And when you look into the happy eyes of your child, so clear and fresh, and new, as if the world were of yesterday, remember : only at the price of death can this be bought. The love for wife and child is not bought too dearly with death. And love in general is worth our giving death for it. For love is, notwithstanding, beautiful. "I have enjoyed earthly happiness, I have lived and loved"—that too is a consolation, and a very effective one. Therefore the ancient Greeks pictured upon their grave-stones, not something sad and dark, but the happiness of life. Therefore, so much the stronger must the warning be in no way to diminish the amount of joy on earth. But men ought always at the same time to remember that, as over against nature they have pleasure and health, and have no legal claim to seventy or eighty years, they ought to receive every new year of life with gladness.

How can a man believe that our life on earth loses all its value and meaning if it is not continued for ever? Are we to measure the worth of life by the "yard-stick of time?" Is the contents of a thing better by an endless extension of it? "If I say to you," remarks Feuerbach, "you are a living, sentient, loving, volitional, rational being, I say something infinitely more real than if I say of you, you are an immortal being. In every act, sensation, thought, there is more being, more real, more actual existence than in immortality. . . . The foolish say : life is a mere empty husk, it perishes like a breath, it vanishes like the wind. But no! Life is music, every moment is a melody or a tone full of soul and mind. . . . The tone may indeed be short or long; but is it nothing more than short or long? The sonata itself perishes, it is not played for ever; but I ask you, what would you call a man who, while a sonata was being played, would not listen but only count the length of the tones as distinct from the contents, and in this abstraction would make the quantity of time in and of itself the only object of his attention, and when the sonata was finished, when the quarter of an hour which it had lasted was past, would affirm as

his judgment of the piece, while others were moved to admiration of its contents, that it was a quarter-of-an-hour sonata? How ought we to name those who make its transitoriness a predicate of life, who believe that they say something, who believe that they pass a judgment upon life when they say that it has an end, that it is mortal and not enduring? This is to say nothing at all. What are we to call those who make nothing into something, and who make something—the real, the contents of life—into nothing?" Were it not foolish to make one's life sad because one must die? Behold we live! "Where we are, death is not, and when death is we are not," said the ancient Epicurus. Far be it from us to forget the solemnity of death, and to deny that in some respects it is an evil. To whom is his own death a matter of perfect indifference, to whom is that of his friends? It is an evil for our feeling; it is a source of pain. The dread of death is a very suitable, a life-preserving characteristic of men, which is developed by natural selection in the struggle for existence; for evidently the preservation of life would be endangered if the creatures themselves were not interested in it. But by means of reflection we are able to diminish this painful emotion, and to associate it with feelings of an exalted and joyful kind. With increasing age and decreasing vitality, the fear of death generally of itself grows less, because opposition between the existing life and non-existence is continually diminishing, until finally it almost vanishes at the normal close of a life, and death has almost nothing more to destroy. Therefore, when a man shrinks back from the thought of death, it is rather the destruction of his present energy and feelings of life than death in ripe old age, and, therefore, than death in general.

Although death is an evil on account of the pain which it brings to the living—and it would still be an evil although we should survive it, still it is not in itself an evil. Seneca says: "Death belongs to the class of things which indeed are not an evil, but still have the appearance of being an evil." Death is not an evil, because evils like good things presuppose conscious existence, but it is the end of all evils—one of the boundary lines



beyond which there is neither good nor evil ; while the other is birth, the non-existence before life. "Death," to quote once more from Seneca, "I have long ago experienced. You ask when? Before I was born. To be dead is to be what we were before, but what this non-existence is I know already ; things will be after me as they were before. If suffering exists in it this must also have been before we saw the light. But we at that time felt no trouble. I ask you would it not be in the highest degree foolish to wish to say that it is worse for the lamp when it is extinguished, than before it was lighted? We also are lighted and extinguished again, in the meantime we feel, before and afterwards there is deep rest."

As to the process of dying there is nothing more frightful in it than in fainting away. "Men build up," says Hufeland, "the most remarkable conception of dying, of the violent separation of the soul from the body and the like. But this is all wholly unfounded. Certainly no man has felt death, and we depart from life with as little consciousness as we enter it." And Hufeland sums up the law and the prophets, the single rule for the soul, in the attainment of happiness and old age in these words : "Love life and do not fear death."

The value of the contents of life will not be lost, but rather increased by the thought of death. The feeling of life must be strengthened by the contrast with its opposite, non-existence. The significance of each day, of every hour, is heightened by the consciousness that it is once for all, that it can never be brought back, that it is a definite part of this our single life. The believer in mortality will not with scorn, as is so often done by those who hope for immortality, regard any single experience, or any joys of himself or others.

Death is to our feelings an evil ; but it would be a greater evil, if there were no death ; for it is the condition of the eternal youth of mankind. We may, therefore, in our mind make our peace with the fact of death ; we recognise that this constitution of the universe which brings about a proportionate rejuvenation of life is good. "Do not despise death," says the Stoic Emperor, "but

be well content with it, since this too is one of those things which nature wills. For, as much as it is to be and to grow old and to increase, and to reach maturity and to have teeth and beard, and grey hairs, and to beget and to be pregnant, and to bring forth, and all the other natural operations which the seasons of thy life bring, such also is dissolution. This then is consistent with the character of a reflecting man, to be neither careless, nor impatient, nor contemptuous, with respect to death, but to wait for it as one of the operations of nature." "Everything harmonises with me which is harmonious to thee, oh Universe! Nothing for me is too early or too late which is in due time for thee. Everything is fruit to me which thy seasons bring, oh Nature! from thee are all things, to thee all things return." We go in good company when we die. The place where all our beloved dead rest, and all the best men of the past, cannot be bad.

Let us lose ourselves in the eternal being of the universe, of which we are a real part, in actual union with the farthest stars. We are not here strangers, but at home. Let us therefore live with our whole soul, and let us be glad and thankful that our fatherland, in spite of many a dark valley, is beautiful. In us nature rejoices in herself; in us she herself blossoms into consciousness; and the ground which brings forth new blossoms abides. Well may we give up our self-seeking, our vanity and discontent, the untrue separation of ourselves from the rest of nature. Let us in mind bathe in the endless flood and tide of physical and mental evolutions, let us widen our Self until it comprehends the whole world and feels its eternity.

We are not ghosts, but living bodies, but so far as we are matter and force we are eternal. Schopenhauer well says: "Because the strong arm which three thousand years ago drew the bow of Ulysses exists no longer, no thoughtful and well-ordered mind will regard the energy which worked so powerfully in it as entirely annihilated, but on further consideration will also not assume that the energy which to-day draws the bow began to exist for the first time with this arm. Much closer lies the thought that the force which formerly actuated a life that has now disappeared, is the

same that is active in the one which now thrives." (We know now that all force is conserved.) "But this will not satisfy the claims which men are accustomed to make in proof of our continuance after death, nor will it furnish the consolation which many expect from it. Nevertheless, there is always something; and he who fears death as an absolute annihilation of his life need not condemn the absolute certainty that the inmost principle of his life remains untouched by death." The material of our body is eternal. How, some one will say, shall the life of mere dust, of raw material, be regarded as a continuation of our being? But in reply we ask: Do you then know this dust? Do you know what it is and what it can do? Learn to know it before you scorn it. This matter which now lies here as dust and ashes may soon be dissolved in water, form itself into a crystal, shine as a metal, send forth the electric spark, may manifest a force, which, decomposing fixed combinations, will reduce earth to metals; yes, it will of itself form plants and animals, and, out of its secret lap will develope that life, for fear of injury to which you are in your narrowness so anxiously careful. Is now the continued existence of such material quite so worthless? So far as we are body, no atom of us is ever lost. But what is more important for us so far as we are mind, we have a continued existence. We are not "as grass," we do not "flourish as a flower of the field, for the wind passeth over it, and it is gone, and the place thereof shall know it no more." Although we die, the effects of our life do not disappear. A brave act, a good word, is often the seed of a thousandfold blessing. And although unseen, still the influence of a true, noble man, in whatever sphere he may live, is none the less real. We may act immortally—act so that the consequences of our deed are lasting life and not death. There is no life which does not exercise upon others a beneficial or pernicious influence; the good is that which dispenses life. We have before us a life which may be a pattern of kindness and justice, if we will; is this prospect worthless for us, if the single life has really a limit? And when we stand at the further border and look back upon a well-ordered life, shall we then say, it was worthless? "I do not

repent having lived, because I have so lived that I do not believe I was born in vain." This said Cato. The consciousness of duty done makes dying easy, so that we can say with Paul: "Death is swallowed up in victory; Oh death! where is thy sting? Oh grave! where is thy victory?" And if we are good we shall leave behind us a friendly remembrance among good men; to be remembered in the heart of a few who are dear to us is a monument to us. Jeremias Gotthelf makes a grandchild, after the death of his noble grandfather, say: "The best words in our house so long as we live will be 'Grandfather said,'—'What would grandfather say?'—'How would it seem to him if he were still living?'"

We live as many times as we love many persons; we live the life of mankind if we love mankind. Let us sow that it may reap, let us work according to our strength that mankind may be better and happier. Let us with hopeful courage prepare the way for a glorious future; then we shall overcome death. The life of mankind is immeasurably long—for us almost a real eternity—and also the possibility of perfection in man and in his relations is immeasurably great; our imagination finds in the true earthly future of the human race an incomparably more fruitful field than was ever offered to the fancy of believers of the old kind. "When men speak of the eternal life and its joy," said Martinus, "I often stop and meditate, but I cannot understand how we shall pass the time." And also the thought may console us that our earth cannot be the only planet with life upon it—life blooms here, or on other stars, for all time.

Love toward man overcomes the fear of death. Although we grow older and approach the outer limits of our own life, still that lives which we love, our interest in life cannot, therefore, grow less; what happens to mankind has become our own personal fate. The answer to the question: "What shall I do to be saved?" remains always the same: Love mankind more than yourself. No truer word has ever been said than this, that "Love is strong as death."

The last hour is an act of life; man may meet it worthily or not; our love or our self-seeking, our bravery or our cowardice,

shows itself then only for the last time. The hour of death makes an indelible impression upon those who survive; he, therefore, who with consciousness sees it near, will regard it as a matter of duty to meet it nobly. If in a circle of friends, he will give them once more a proof of his love, and this will bring him consolation. Duty and Love—these are the conquerors of death.

#### (4.) *The Death of Friends.*

Let us not deceive ourselves, let us not strip the most solemn events of life of their deep and earnest significance; the death of friends is a deep, indeed an irreparable, loss, and we have a right to weep.

Grief at the death-bed of one we love has not only one source. Now for the first time, do many with clear consciousness apply practically to themselves the old saying, "All men must die," and say: "I must die—and who knows how soon!" Nevertheless this element of pain, if it is present at all, is generally very slight; for many, even for such who entertain no hope of meeting again in heaven, find a certain consolation in the thought, "I too." "To you, my dear daughter, nothing worse happened than what awaits me." Another element is the deep sympathy with the one who has died. This one, however, suffers no more pain, he has the perfect peace; we can really sympathise only with the one who is dying, and who sees himself torn from those he loves, and from his most precious and unfinished undertakings. The most terrible pain which the open grave can call forth is that when we must say to ourselves: It is too late, we can never make good the wrong we have done to the dead! But even when this thought does not enter in, still the pain remains which the loss of a beloved being causes us; and deep may be the sorrow for the loss which has fallen upon others, perhaps upon the whole community. Even the hope of immortality could not persuade us to regard the great evil as no evil. True and beautiful are the words of Dühring on the loss of one from whom death has taken the most cherished friend: "The loss is in the strictest sense of the

word irreparable. It were foolish to wish to find means which could recompense one for such a fate. The feeling must be left to its own law, and to the reconciling power of time. Wholly of itself it leads to the single point of view from which the bitter pain is resolved into a serene sorrow. It lifts a man above the particular and individual to the consideration of the whole. It directs his gaze toward the human race in general, and quickens his participation in it to a degree which in the undisturbed attention to his individual existence he is not capable of rising. The special destiny attempts to sink itself in the infinity of things, to dissolve individual pain in the great whole of universal fate. The individual man always has a right to lament when accident or death robs him of the object of his deep affections; but the race, considered as a whole, dare not regret that in a part of its members it must suffer misfortunes which keep alive participation in the higher and more universal character of life. Except for the outlook upon the wide extent of immeasurable life, which sorrow for one irreparably lost causes us to take, our life would lack the motive for rising above the narrow limits of transient existence."

"But however natural and sacred the deep grief for our loss, we ought to attempt to assuage it, for," as Plutarch declared, "suffering for one dead, if too violent, overreaches the mark, and defeats itself in its care for the memory of the dead, because a memory that is too painful induces a man to blot it out." We must always think that those we care for are not quite lost; if we love them truly, they live in us until our life ceases. "For ever wilt thou love and she be fair," this is the consolation which the poet offers the unhappy man from whom death had snatched away the one most loved. We may continue grateful; we need not forget the inestimable benefit which the life, although so short, of one we cherish, has been to us. "The noble do not ask too much," says Salter, "they do not expect too much. They know that much they have, and they do not grudge to give it up, nor think that because they have it, they must have it everlastingly. There is so much selfishness in grief; overwhelmed with a sense of loss,

we are apt to think of nothing else, and the great gain there has been to us in the life that has been taken away is forgotten, the preciousness of which we can perhaps only realize when the sting of present grief is gone, and the dead face lives again in the calm and sacred land of memory. Rather with a noble resignation and thankfulness should we consign our dear ones to the grave. It is not, my friends, that we are singled out for a special judgment; when we give up our dead, we but enter into a common sorrow, a sorrow that visits the proudest and humblest, that has entered into unnumbered hearts before us and will innumerable ones after us, a sorrow that should make the world one, and dissolve all other feelings into sympathy and love. . . . Yes, not only with resignation, but with thankfulness, let us give up our dead, thankfulness for all they have been to us, thankfulness for all the memories they leave with us, thankfulness—for our lives are richer because of them. And not only our own life but that of others is made richer." Well may we lament when a precious life is taken away from mankind. But we must not forget to be glad that it was ours at all, and when the most beautiful life comes to an end, we may remember that that from whence it came still exists; we have experienced what it is able to produce, and we know what it will be able to produce in the future.

"Honour to the dead! For without them we should be nothing—nothing but naked savages in dreary swamps and wildernesses, our soul itself a swamp and wilderness." The soul of the best lives in us, many of their words echo to-day as audibly in our ear as they did hundreds and thousands of years ago in the ear of their contemporaries. It is for us to seek to attain such an eternal soul! And if the dead have left behind them errors, we honour them by avoiding these, and we complete the good begun by them. Such work, earnest, diligent and useful, will give us a mental exhilaration, better than any journey into foreign countries, or any distraction amusement can afford.

Duty and love—these are the holiest consolation. "Arise, be strong!" says Felix Adler to the bereaved, "you are not free, you

poor and sadly stricken friends, to stand aside in idle woe, but you shall make for the departed a memorial in your lives." "The love you can no longer lavish on one, the many call for it. The cherishing care you can no longer bestow upon your child, the neglected children of the poor appeal for it. The sympathy you can no longer give your friend, the friendless cry for it. In alleviating the misery of others, your own misery will be alleviated, and in healing you will find that there is cure." "To help one another is our wisdom and our renown, and our sweet consolation." Stanton Coit speaks of "that feeling which in the darkest hour of bereavement steals into us with a warm familiar light. A peace floods the soul ; we are no longer alone. It appears at the moment when resignation becomes complete, and private sorrow melts into universal sympathy. Only a few days ago a woman, whose heart had been bleeding because death had torn her child from her arms, told me that she had had this sweet experience, just when the blackness of grief had settled thickest upon her. She called it the awakening to the consciousness of God as a loving father. But as she told me, and as I heard her relate how, since that comfort came, she had sought out the poor and the dying everywhere, especially little children, and wanted to be a mother to them, I could not help thinking that what she had awakened to was the consciousness, not of God as a loving father, but of the whole world as her beloved child."

(5.) *Death as a Moral Friend.*

"Thy love must last, whate'er betide !  
Whate'er befall, let love not fail !  
Soon comes the hour when thou beside  
The grave of friends shalt stand and wail !"

This is the warning death gives us, death our earnest friend and moral adviser. It teaches us to live. And the more fervently does it bid us love, if it is really death, the final end, after which there will be no meeting again. We must be kindly and peaceable. We dare not cause pain to those dear to us ; who knows



how soon they shall be withdrawn for ever ! Let not the sun go down upon your wrath.

"O the anguish," says George Eliot, "of that thought that we can never atone to our dead for the stunted affection we have shown them, for the light answers we return to their complaints or their pleadings, for the little reverence we showed to that sacred human soul that lived so close to us, and was the divinest thing God had given us to know ! " Let us not wait until our own personal experience brings forth this bitter cry of pain ! We may show before it is too late to our faithful loved ones, wife, sister, child, friend, teacher, the love, tenderness, and respect, which is really in us. It is a common experience "that only after our friends are taken from us do we in general appreciate them. But if their death has this effect upon us, then the mere thought of their death will have a better effect. Without overwhelming us with grief and regret, it will make us appreciate them while they are still living. How all of us pitied, even to contempt, the great Carlyle, when we heard of his remorse for having neglected his wife, which her death awakened in him. Why did he not anticipate this event by bringing it earlier before his imagination ? Then, all that she was made to suffer, and all his bitterness and self-reproach would have been prevented. The sting of bereavement is not in the loss, but in this, that all chance to atone for the past is over. Perhaps we did not fully express in word and act our real devotion, perhaps we were cruel in little things, perhaps we refused to gratify a thousand minor wishes, which, if gratified, would have produced a world of pleasure, and cost no pain. But let us not wait until some bitter experience has forced this thought upon us. How often parents are severe and impatient toward their children, sacrificing their children's pleasure to further worldly success, until one day one of them is stricken down, then the rule of the household becomes tempered with thoughtful regard,—so that, if the rest shall be taken away, at least they shall have been, while they remained, happy and free. . . . And equally wholesome is the thought of the death of those whom we only meet in business or casually. The rich employer

may bring before his imagination the sure result of those long hours of work to this frail woman, or to that man already ill and needing rest, and may prevent the suffering. Thus in place of the pangs of guilt, which in a short time their death would cause him, he may bring to himself the immediate joy of blessing others, and give them, in place of their untimely suffering, health and the sweet sense of being treated like human beings. O death ! thou dost wound us, but most surely in this that thou remindest us of the wounds we too have inflicted."

And as the thought of the death of friends makes it easier to fulfil our duties toward them, and spares us the pangs of conscience, so likewise it withdraws from the loss, when it really comes, part of its terrible violence. He who is duly mindful that the possession of friends is one which may be taken away, will not be overwhelmed when the common lot of mankind falls upon some loved one, earlier than upon himself. "He who anticipates the future," says Seneca in his letter of consolation to Marcia, "extracts the sting from evil when it comes."

In the same way as that of friends, the thought of our own death assists us in living a right life. And, therefore, the thought of the one as well as of the other is a duty. The night when no man can work, the sleep from which there is no awakening, approaches nearer and nearer to us ; let us not be already dead, that is, without activity ! "Do quickly what thou canst—do not loiter ! Yet to-day do what thou oughtest !" is Lavater's warning to us. Let us watch because we do not know in what hour death shall come. "So live," says Thomas à Kempis, "that death may never see thee unprepared." And although we may be granted a long life, still we do not know whether we shall continue to have the energy of body and mind which is a pre-requisite of the work which we could do now. And how much work there is to be done in the world, how many imperfections to destroy, how many good things to acquire ! Rabbi Tarphon says : "The day is short, the labour great !"

But let us not misunderstand these warnings. They urge us to action, to zeal, not to postpone what we can do to-day, not to

be idle so long as we have energy ; but they do not mean for us to overwork and disregard the rules of health. "Excessive activity," says Goethe, "of any kind, makes us bankrupt at the last." It is our duty not to become incapable of rendering the services which we owe to mankind as long as possible.

Death gives life a higher significance ; it makes us value every day and hour, for they are definite parts of life which can never be brought back. "The days of our years are three score and ten," says the psalm, speaking of a completed human life, which is granted only to few. But suppose we do attain this relatively great age, still the days are not many, not thirty thousand. How soon they are gone by ! There is reason for us to remember that it is a part of our life over which we have control, a day, a week, a month ! Moses prayed God to "teach us to number our days that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom."

Life is a serious thing, for it is the only life. We must be economical and not waste it, as we might be led to do by the notion that it was going to continue for ever. Because it is short, we will not make it shorter by trying to kill the time which lies between the present and some expected enjoyment. But that is a very common mistake. "One man," says Rousseau, "wishes that to-morrow morning were already here, another next month, another a time ten years hence ; no one of them wishes to live to-day ; none is satisfied with the present hour. All find that it drags too slowly. If they complain that the time passes too quickly, they speak falsely ; they would purchase the power to make life hasten."

The thought of death will make us live in temperance. Surely the idea of death is in fact, as Hufeland thought, an excellent help to a right life. Death teaches us how to live, the most difficult of all arts. It is a good "professor of morals," as Asmus says, it heals us of our vanity, scorn, heartlessness, and worldly ambition ; it gives us moderation and dignity, it makes us brave and strong. Voltaire's thought that "as we have only two days to live, it is not worth while to spend these in cringing before wretched scoundrels," might do many unworthy restless strivers much good. Death

makes us live inwardly, makes us give up mere outward show, and not entrust our whole heart to what may be lost. "Find peace not in men, not in friendship, not in the hope of future happiness, but in the God, in the good that is in thee." This is the precept the thought of death enjoins upon us. Death helps us to bear pain courageously, it helps us to attain the final aim of life. We need the "Memento Mori" as a means of discipline, and therefore it is our advantage to entertain the thought often; but not more often than needful; we must not make ourselves gloomy.

(6.) *The Worship and Love of God as the Basis of Morality.*

Some believers in God consider that man is capable of leading a moral life without being urged into it by the hope of future reward, or the fear of a future punishment; and they recognise the fact that life would still be worth living even if it were not endless. But they at the same time call attention to a high significance which an enlightened idea of God, purely as such, possesses for the moral elevation of mankind. God is the ideal of the highest perfection, and our aim is to become like him. "Be ye perfect even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." Those who reason in this way would lead us to do good through motives of worship and love of God.

This way is more worthily and wisely chosen than that which the egoistic believers in God recommend to us. But if we are capable of reverencing the moral attributes in God, and of letting ourselves in that way become enthusiastic to emulate him, we must then also be capable of reverencing them in men, and in that way being led to desire perfection. We do not need first to set that which is worthy of reverence up in heaven, in order to see that it is worthy. Nay, rather we must first feel the human worth before we can grasp the thought of divine perfection. All the characteristics of divine goodness are characteristics of human goodness. And what else is piety but a transference of the feelings which a child has for its parents to the relation of men

toward their Creator? In a family the feeling of piety does not have its root in the belief in God. In general all the feelings which men have entertained toward their gods, so far as they have not been purely æsthetic, have been social and human, feelings which were originally excited by the contemplation of human beings. This is expressed even by Pestalozzi, and that in the passage where he is aiming to defend the indispensability of the idea of God. "This I soon saw," he explains, "that the feelings of love, trust, thankfulness, and the habit of obedience must be developed in me before I can entertain them towards God." "I must love men, I must trust men, I must obey men, before I can raise myself to the level of loving God, thanking him, trusting him and obeying him." "For he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?" And in truth the thought of perfection actualised in men must be a stronger incentive than the thought of perfection in God. The picture which men make of the character of God is, in proportion indistinct and colourless as they attempt to form a less anthropomorphic conception of him; great and good men are a pattern which exercises a greater power over the imagination and emotions. What is more, that which men could achieve, an admirer of their excellence can perhaps also himself do. But he cannot entertain the notion of equalling God. Accordingly we see that it was the thought of the man Buddha which exercised upon millions an ennobling influence, that it was the thought of another man which, more than the idea of the Father in heaven, inspired those who called themselves Christians. Even those who do not regard Jesus of Nazareth as a God may be most deeply penetrated with his personality, and experience a powerful influence from it upon their inner life. But the attitude of a morally well developed man is most certainly different from that of a believer of the old style.

But now the theologian will call our attention to the idea of the omnipresence and omnipotence of God, and the significance of these for the moral life of man. The thought that God is not far off from us, and knows what we do, must, he says, make us strong

in time of danger and suffering, and free us from temptations ! God sees us ! You cannot escape God's eye though you take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea ! From how many countless wicked deeds this thought has held men back ! God, your Protection and Defence, is standing by your side wherever you may be, what confidence and what reassurance this consciousness has given men in time of danger ! But does it then not remain true that something divine is ever near to us wherever we may be, that it sees us although the darkness is round about us ? The divine dwells in us, and everything great, good, and holy, in the idea of God arises out of our own heart ; moral consciousness is the spring of all that has value in religion. When the fictions are set aside which have been attached to the real experiences of the soul these latter will not vanish.

But if the voice of this inner witness be weak, what then ? What except the thought of God, it is said, can keep a man upright, spur him on to do good, and hold him back from evil ? The answer is : the thought of men whom you honour and love, these, if you hold them up before your mind, will call out to you : "Be true, be brave !" The ideal companionship of good men, whether dead or living, is what we need. What is the reading of the New Testament other than an association with Christ and his apostles ? And in the same way many are the dead who speak to us and bring us life.

### *(7.) Theology and Responsibility.*

Many have believed that we must assume personal immortality, because only upon this supposition, it is said, can a man be responsible. Of those who think this we have a right to demand that they prove the connection of the sense of duty and responsibility with belief in God and immortality. We are bound to do right, not because God wills it, nor because he will punish wrong conduct with tortures after death, but, on the contrary, if we are bound to follow God's commandments, it must be because what they command us to do is

right. Not because God commands them, but because they are right, are we bound to do certain deeds—this is the expression of our moral consciousness. But a commandment which does not come out of our own heart, a “thou shalt” which another says to us, may be a commandment and an ought—but a moral commandment or ought it is not. And our feeling of moral responsibility is the consciousness that we shall have pangs of conscience if we do not act in a certain way; it has nothing whatever to do with the notion that another being will inflict pain upon us on account of it in another world. But let us examine more closely this belief in a compensation after death.

If men, just as they are, are created and preserved by an all-powerful God, their sins must fall back upon him, and he must be responsible for them. Can he be all-good and all-wise? If, in order to rescue his goodness at the risk of his omnipotence, we say that God does not will evil, but cannot prevent it, this kind of a belief, it must be granted, leaves morality uninjured, but it offers no protection and no security which morality did not already possess before. A God who cannot help would, in the opinion of most believers, not be a God at all.

The theologians have discovered a means of disburdening the Creator of responsibility for the sins of his creatures. They assume an uncaused will in men, which cuts the connection between God and the transgressions of men. God, they tell us, has made all good, even the first human beings; these received together with other perfections the power of volition purely arbitrary; they misused this by eating the forbidden fruit, when tempted by the serpent. Thus sin came into the world, and by the fall of Adam and Eve all their posterity have become sinful. But this is no satisfactory explanation. For, whence came the serpent, the evil enemy who sinned from the beginning? “Charlevoix informs us that when he related to his pupil all the evils which the evil spirit brought into creation which was good in the beginning, and how this same spirit tried continually to thwart the best divine institutions, the pupil with indignation asked: But why did God not strike the devil dead? to which question he frankly admits that in

his haste he could find no answer." But let us turn to Adam and Eve ; to say that God created man with a power to act without a foregoing cause, implies that God did not create him, that he made him, but did not make him into anything definite—in short, it is a collection of words without sense. The power to act without motive only plays the rôle which was played, according to Lord Shaftesbury's interpretation, by the ancient Prometheus, who was introduced in order to diminish Zeus's responsibility for the badness of men. "Why had mankind so much folly and perverseness? Prometheus was the cause. The plastic artist with his unlucky hand solved all. It was his contrivance, and he was to answer for it. They fairly made Jove the stander-by. He resolved, it seems, to be neuter, and see what would come of this notable experiment." "Excellent way," explained Shaftesbury, "to satisfy the heathen vulgar. But how think you would a philosopher digest this? For the gods, he would say presently, either could have hindered Prometheus' creation, or they could not. If they could, they were answerable for the consequences ; if they could not, they were no longer gods, being limited and controlled. And whether Prometheus was the name for chance, destiny, the plastic nature, or an evil demon—of every so designed being—it was still the same breach of omnipotence." "Neither free-will nor absolute fate removes from the deity the burden of participation in crime," says Frederick the Great.

An all-knowing God must have known beforehand how his creature would act, and that with its constitution it would do evil ; he must have known what use it would make of its arbitrary power. If, in spite of this, he bestowed such power, he must have wished the creature should act as he did act, and upon him rests the responsibility.

Some persons say that the all-powerful and all-knowing One is not responsible for evil, because he merely permitted it. To such Job has already replied : "Will you speak wickedly for God, and talk deceitfully for him?" Do you wish, we may add, to confuse our moral ideas in order to please the God of justice? "Woe unto them that called evil good and good evil ; that put



darkness for light and light for darkness!" If it were not God but man who had to answer to the charge, theologians would scarcely think of bringing forward such an excuse, and our earthly judges would by no means accept it as valid. If the guilty one is a man, then even the theologian will say with Hobbes: "I find no difference between the will to have a thing done and the permission to do it, when he that permitteth knows that it will be done unless he hindered it." If a father was aware that his child, if allowed to go into the machine-room of a factory, would go too near the wheels and get hurt, perhaps even killed, and if the father, nevertheless, did not hold the child back from the danger, although he could have done so, then everyone would say, if the child should be injured, the father had willed it, and he would be held responsible; and the punishment would fall upon him, even though mere carelessness and not criminal purpose could be proved against him. Section 222 of the German Criminal Law Book reads: "Whoever by carelessness causes the death of a man will be punished with imprisonment for a year. If the one who does so was especially bound to attend to what he neglected, by virtue of his office, calling, or trade, the punishment can be increased to five years' imprisonment." Then let everyone finally give up the vain attempt of justifying God by saying that he permitted arbitrary accident to enter the world, and that this alone is the cause of all evil.

But still it will be said: in our ethics the permission of evil is by no means to be justified,—but God's justice is not our justice, his goodness is not our goodness; it is different from ours, not only in degree but in kind:—God's perfection is "more than moral." But if God's justice and goodness are not our justice and goodness, we use words without sense if we call him good and just. "More than moral" is only a designation to flatter God for that which we do not call moral. Mill remarks: "To say that God's goodness may be different in kind from man's goodness, what is it but saying with a slight change of phraseology that God may possibly not be good? To say in words what we do not think in meaning is as suitable a definition as can be given of a moral falsehood." But if anyone wishes to justify the per-

mission of immorality by calling the one who permits it a more than moral being, the consequences would be that we ought not to struggle against immorality, since it is part of the incomprehensible wisdom of a being more than moral. Accordingly we should only bring down his wrath upon us by hindering what we call crimes. Much rather must we accustom ourselves to the thought that our virtue is, perhaps, after all, a vice, that in the presence of the perfect God and in consideration of compensative punishment it could not stand. For God's justice, it is said, is not our justice. Thus finally would morality be done away with. These ideas which we have been combating have been handed over to us from times which were inferior to ours in moral and intellectual cultivation; and therefore it is very natural that they could find no justification in our reason and in our moral consciousness.

It was very natural that a belief in punishment after death should arise. The passion for revenge, which originally indulged itself almost unchecked, persecuted a man even beyond the grave; as the body of the one struck down was further mutilated, so also was his "soul" to be injured, and this wish was fulfilled by the gods. "As the man is, so is his God." This need of revenge after death was retained also in higher stages of civilization; but it grows weak and passes away in proportion as men become wiser, kinder, and juster.

The notion of a punishment after death must be given up; for, besides resting upon the unproved supposition that the soul continues after death, it contradicts our moral judgment. Punishments which men inflict upon men are right, because they are necessary means to prevent evil; but suffering which a God would inflict upon man in another world, because it had been lacking here, would be unjust. How foolish, as Feuerbach well says, to infer from the lack of human justice, from the fact that the innocent often suffer here, the necessity of a divine justice!

The wise father, the wise mother, who wish to bring up their children to be good and happy, will not make use of the fear of eternal torment, nor of the idea that the sacredness of goodness

depends upon heaven and hell,—lest when the idea of retribution after death is lost, as it may easily be, the feeling should arise that the sanctity of good conduct had also been taken away. And the wise statesman will not attempt to preserve artificial ideas that are outgrown, but he will build upon fresh and living emotions to which the future belongs.

By giving up the belief that a higher power embodies our ideals of justice, our feeling of moral responsibility is not diminished but augmented. The notion that a Divine Being in some way or another will reward goodness and punish badness, will help tenderly the poor and neglected and finally bring all the evil that men do into the service of goodness, may be consoling, but it may very easily mislead us into not applying all our energies in our struggle for the good and against the evil, but rather tempt us to look to support from above; and thus the belief in a moral order of the universe may prevent the universe from becoming morally ordered. Whoever is aware that the consequences of his conduct are inevitable, that no God ever turns evil into good, will manifest greater earnestness in his conduct. Whoever is convinced that no one helps men if they do not help one another, that they hunger in soul and body, if they do not receive earthly support, that love does not dwell above the stars but in our own heart, and that if we are ever to behold the divine and a kingdom of heaven, we ourselves must create it;—whoever has this conviction will apply himself with so much the greater zeal and energy to the human task,—he will more loudly summon his fellow-men as his only comrades in a struggle for the good, when his own energy is not adequate,—he will not think, as so many believers in ancient doctrines have thought, that the universal order of things round about him, in spite of all the misery and trouble which it contains, is holy, simply because brought about by the incomprehensible wisdom of God, but he will feel himself responsible for its evils. “To understand,” says Edith Simcox, “that the will of every man is a moral power, second to nothing except the united or compound will of many men, does not make men less, but rather more disposed to value the type of human per-

fection which they have no choice but to conceive as the supreme good ; and to understand that if they wish this type realised, they must realise it themselves, does not make them less but rather more disposed than before to do the practical work which they suppose to be favourable to their desire."

## CHAPTER IX.

### ETHICS AND THEOLOGY.—(*Continued.*)

“The truth shall make you free.”—St. John, viii. 32.

#### (1.) *Christianity in the Present Age.*

“THE new thought is in literature, in poetry, in science, in the daily newspaper. The differences between cultivated men in all churches and in none are really surprisingly small. If we do not ask for particular opinions, much less attack them, but simply notice how they are reflected in a man's view of life, society, trade, politics—and this is the only real test—educated Presbyterians do not differ essentially from educated Baptists or Methodists or Unitarians. Their particular denominational connections are a matter of birth and tradition. Their religion is, under a difference of pious names and phrases, a reverence for goodness and a confidence that the universe is on that side.” Thus says Salter, and he is right. Human experience, thought and moral consciousness are no longer compatible with the faith which was in former times a consolation and a support. The change of our whole way of thinking and believing has been accomplished quite gradually, almost imperceptibly, but it is irresistible. Our whole view of the world is from beginning to end different from that which is presupposed in our traditional documents, the contents of which come from times and from races which had no true sciences. The conceptions which a child left to itself builds up concerning nature, are very different from those of a scientific investigator of nature; and likewise those views of the world which sprang up in the childhood of mankind deviate widely from the ones to which the more highly developed and critical mind has reached. And the ripened mind of mankind can as little accept the views of earlier

periods as a standard of truth, as a man can recognise the fancies of childhood's years as a guiding star for mature age. The old theology presupposes the ancient cosmology. But for us the world is no longer a plain, over which the blue bell-glass stretches, where like eternal candles, sun, moon, and stars move about to give light to men; and under which, the region of future punishment stretches; but our world is a system among many systems of stars in which the earth is almost a vanishing point, and the sun no longer moves about the earth, and the blue heaven is no longer a solid bell-glass which serves as a footstool for the gods, and in the depths of the earth we do not find the lower world. And no longer do we believe that the world is governed by individual acts of arbitrary will, which occasionally make the stars halt in their course, no longer do we believe in miracles and in chance, but in the supremacy of unchangeable laws. Owing to this immense transformation in our view of the world the whole sphere of human thought has been changed, and thoughts and doctrines which arose out of pre-Copernican, pre-scientific times, and which have their root entirely in childish notions of nature, cannot satisfy mankind to-day. But hundreds of years are required, of course, before all the consequences, which follow with logical necessity from such radical changes, will be drawn consciously by any but a very few minds.

Let us assume for the time—as at present so many do—that, as a necessary consequence of the new view of the universe, we must renounce the fundamental doctrines of Christian, Jewish, and Mahomedan theology: the doctrine of a personal God, to whom men may turn in prayer, and of personal immortality; on this supposition what becomes of morality, what is ethics minus theology? Has it more significance or less than before?

(2.) *Theological Unbelief.*

The great American poet, Ralph Waldo Emerson, said: "The mind of this age has fallen from theology to morals. I conceive it to be an advance." "The progress of religion is steadily

to its identity with morals." Is this true, is it a step forward? We believe that it is.

All sciences and arts have freed themselves from supernaturalism and now rest alone upon facts, in accordance with experience. And they have become not weaker but stronger. The moral energies of mankind likewise are striving at present to make themselves independent and to throw off everything transcendental, metaphysical, and foreign, which has enveloped them. The churches in the past have doubted the free moral strength of mankind. They do still; and in that way they are an obstacle to the moral life. St. Augustine writes that free-will without God's grace and the Holy Ghost can do nothing but sin. This also was Luther's view, who said that everything which is in our own will is bad, and everything which is in our understanding is even an error and a blindness. Because the Church still retains this doctrine, although perhaps she seldom gives it so strong an expression, we cannot recognize her as the representative of the moral life of to-day. "All that the positive religions desire, as they tell us," says Felix Adler, Lecturer to the Society for Ethical Culture of New York, "is to elevate the moral life of the members of the churches and the community. . . . They all say: 'We want to lead men to do what is right;' but they add, 'No man can do what is right unless he first accepts certain doctrines.' . . . Therefore you must lay the whole emphasis of your teaching on belief in God, or belief in a future state of rewards and punishments. . . . They think it is necessary to reach the conscience indirectly. We believe it is possible to reach the conscience directly. . . . The effect has been, as shown by history, that this assumption that there are certain preliminaries which must be fulfilled has led men to give their chief time and attention to these preliminaries; and in the attempt to build up these indispensable conditions to the moral life, strange to say, the religious world has ignored the first principles of morality. . . . The round-about method of the Christian Church has born evil fruit. The way you seek good is false. By teaching that belief is necessary you are putting obstacles between man and right action."

And the leader of the Philadelphia Society for Ethical Culture, Samuel Burns Weston, says : " Morality has always, even to this very day, occupied a place of secondary importance in religion. And herein we feel bound to differ from all the religions of the past. We believe that morality should be brought to the foreground in religion, as the one object of prime and fundamental importance. In the very fact that the religions have hitherto regarded the moral life of man as less essential than doctrinal beliefs, in the fact that they have given the priority to beliefs concerning powers and realms wholly apart from human life, we have the secret of all their wide differences and bitter antagonisms."

And W. L. Sheldon, the Ethical Lecturer in St. Louis, says : " The trouble has been that a vast deal of the strength and enthusiasm of the religious teacher, has had to be drawn off and wasted in rallying their forces in defence of their intellectual position. Too much of their energy has to be expended in explaining away doubts, finding new meanings for old ways and forms, trying to prove *this* instead of *that*, or *that* instead of *this*, to be the teaching of the pristine church, so that only a small surplus of power is in reserve to be cast in the direction of stemming the tide of moral lassitude which is threatening to overwhelm the world. Men of splendid mental attainments and of high moral enthusiasm, who, if their energies could be concentrated in the one direction of their sympathies, might achieve great work for the betterment of the race, are hampered and constantly set back by having the dogmas and creeds dragging at their heels. Will the time come—as come we hope it may—when the clergy will say from their very souls: ' I care not whether this that I say be Judaism or not Judaism, Christian or not Christian, Scriptural or not Scriptural, by the faith within me, by the study that I have made, by all that I hold dear, come what may—I believe this thing that I assert to be the truth, therefore alone I care for it.' When the clergy have once said this, we shall have in the world a corps of religious teachers who will perhaps shake the world from its moral lethargy and indifference, and build finally a bulwark of religious fact which shall stand the wear and tear of the limitless ages."



And Stanton Coit, Lecturer of the South Place Ethical Society, London, says: "Ethics is the science of good character and right conduct, and it is based on our moral experience and our moral judgment, and should be kept independent of all theology, just as the science of correct thinking is, or political economy, and all other sciences of the mind and society, and as all practical arts are. We are pledged to no philosophical theory as to the nature of God and the universe, or as to the limits of human knowledge. And as long as the atheist, or theist, or agnostic, or positivist does not derive his sanctions to right actions from his speculative theories, we gladly welcome him. We would leave the speculative thought of each individual free . . . and assert that character and conduct are independent of philosophical speculations. We would then unite on the basis of character and conduct, and try to build up these as best we can in ourselves and others."

### (3.) *The Church and Ethical Societies.*

According to Immanuel Kant all those who regard not formulated creeds and church ceremonies, but the disposition of a well-ordered life as the true service of God, constitute an invisible church. If they join together for the exclusive purpose of opposing evil in the world and furthering the good, they constitute an "Ethical Society." Such societies have been organised in our day in America under the direction of Felix Adler, who appears to have been influenced by no one more than by Kant. "Among all the exhausted craters," says a liberal religious critic of our times, "I see but one summit beginning to dart out the sacred flame. The movement which in largeness, freedom, influence, may claim to be the successor to that of Channing, of Parker, of Emerson, is one in New York which is trying to found religion on pure morality"—the Ethical Movement of Felix Adler and his friends. "Whether a church is equal to the test of its times is seen in its ability to draw to it the moral genius of its times." The clergy have been educated, not

to be the moral leaders of the people, but scholarly theologians, philologists, and historians; and accordingly the people have become very much educated in theology and very little in ethics. "The moral ignorance of educated people is a necessary result of the long confusion of morality with theology."

Those who would found an Ethical religion, the basis of which is not to be supernatural mysteries which no man can understand, but something which all believe, and no man of sound sense doubts, have removed the occasion of Emerson's accusations against our times. "It accuses us," says Emerson, "that pure ethics is not now formulated and concreted into a cultus, a fraternity, with assemblies and holy days, with song and book, with brick and stone." Ethical societies have recognised the self-sufficiency of the moral consciousness, and have made it the whole basis of their belief and action. The place which the old churches gave to theology, they give to morality, to upright conduct. They feel no enmity toward the Jewish or Christian religion; on the contrary, they are at present perhaps the truest friends of these religions, inasmuch as they would rescue for the coming time everything which in these historic forms mankind has by experience discovered to be of moral worth; while those who wish to preserve at any price the outward forms and beliefs, are doing all in their power to make mankind lose everything. The ethical religion, its moral faith, leads also to practical work among the poor. In many ways there is evidence that the pure belief in man, and the pure love for mankind, belief in the glorified earth to be created by man's own energy, the appeal to man's single responsibility for that which happens in the moral world, the appeal to the feeling of duty and of the moral joy which accompanies right action are now more powerful than speculative doctrines of a theological or metaphysical kind. There is evidence that the problems of life wax greater than the problems of theology.

What then are the ethical societies aiming at? "The forms of dogmatic belief currently taught," answers the Ethical Society of Chicago, in its Statement of Principles, "have ceased to com-

mand our intellectual assent or satisfy our moral needs. They obstruct the development both of mind and heart. The Society for Ethical Culture aims to serve the cause of the good independently of the religious dogmas of the past. While standing entirely outside the churches, whether Christian or Jewish, it does not spend its time in attacking them, but seeks to take up the work which they to such an extent leave undone—the work of moral and social reform.”

The Statement of Principles by the Philadelphia Society contains the following sentences: “We affirm the need of a new statement of the ethical code of mankind. The formulations of duty which were given by the great religious teachers of the past are not sufficient for the changed conditions of modern society. We believe that moral problems have arisen in this industrial, democratic, scientific age, which require new and larger formulations of duty.”

And one of the ethical lecturers states their position thus: “The advantage of the churches is that they have the past behind them, the advantage of the ethical movement is that before it lies the future. What are our convictions? A nobler and larger faith is to take the place of the old one, humanity is to wake up to nobler tasks, the good that is in us is to arise out of its sleep and match the miracle of legend with a miracle of fact, bring a new order out of the chaos in which humanity still lives, and lift the earth and the struggling millions of men into the light and joy of heaven.”

Do we deceive ourselves in hoping that sometime in the distant future, when swords shall be beaten into ploughshares and the spears into pruning-hooks, the Christian Churches will all be transformed into ethical societies? Mankind is still young! Churches we hope there will always be. Organ and song shall ever resound there, but we hope that the hymns will become purely human and moral, that men will not sacrifice to God or petition him, but will appeal to men and make men better. God in heaven does not need us, but we need all of our emotional energy in order to make our earth, which is so full of evil, more

like the ideal. How much of what is best and noblest in men is lost to their fellow-men, because it is directed toward something outside the human world, toward something which may not exist, and which if it exists is self-sufficient. Is this right? Ought we not rather to trust and believe with all our heart in the good itself, in all our trials take refuge in it, and commit our affections to it? Of this God should not the prayer hold good: "Thou shalt have none other gods besides me?"

#### (4.) *Heaven and Earth.*

Just as the conception of God has not recognised the good in us as the true God, so also the belief that our heaven is not to be on earth has depreciated the worth of life. What sacrifices of human life has the faith in an existence after death demanded? Countless millions! How often have women and slaves been obliged to follow their dead into the grave! And what bloody wars have been waged for the salvation of the soul! And to how many has life become as nothing in itself, as simply a preparatory school for a life after death! Those who take this view will scarcely fulfil the duties of citizenship and the duties of humanity. How remarkable it would be if those who feel themselves in this world as strangers and pilgrims, who indeed look upon this world as a prison-house should be pre-eminent for love of country. The family, the country, our fellow-men and coming generations cannot awaken their highest enthusiasm.

Some will say, perhaps, that men find in their religious worship nevertheless a deep inward satisfaction: and therefore that such exercise of the man's emotional energy, is not idle and fruitless, even though their belief be a mere fancy. Life, it is said, is full of sin and trouble, so full of what is petty, and ugly; it satisfies so little our holiest desires, it is in such dire need of the beautifying light of religious poetry, that it would be a degradation of life should any one rob us of the soothing prospect of heaven. But we must ask: Life is full of pain and trouble, and

you demand the refreshment of a heaven in order to be cheered up? Pettiness and ugliness meet you everywhere, and therefore you wish to revel in an ideal existence remote from this life? But is it right to seek this refreshment and enjoyment? It is just this habit of finding consolation in the belief and prophetic vision of more than earthly glories, and letting your hands lie idle instead of combating the pain and evil, and making worthier the world in and outside yourself, that causes so much misery and evil to continue. Turn the energy of your heart, not to idealising the world in your thought, but to working out your ideals in actual life. Do your part, and less evil will disgrace the earth; and the consciousness that your life is devoted to the welfare of mankind will lift you above, although in the midst of, all the evils of existence, and you will find a peace and blessedness not inferior to that which the old religions brought to the pious. "Behold I will create new heavens and a new earth, and the former shall not be remembered nor come into mind." It is mankind itself which must speak these words and put them into act. The new heaven is the consciousness of devoting one's life to the new earth, and this is the earth wherein dwelleth righteousness and joy.

Churches, transformed into Ethical Societies, will exist in the future, with song and organ and chime of bells—yes, with greater glory than ever in the past the poetic arts in stone, and sound, and measured word have lent to them. For, as in outward life, physical help, so man needs in his inner life moral communion with others, the awakening and strengthening of the good in him by others; and he needs the assistance of the arts. These are not supernaturalistic, they merely represent human existence and effort. And the sermon also need not be supernaturalistic; it need not involve hypotheses which contradict the facts of science and lack proof; it can touch the human heart and inspire it without taking the round-about way through heaven, it can appeal to conscience directly without threats of eternal torment; it does not need to be behind the times, or to present "that inhuman conception," as Dühring calls it, "accord-

ing to which, man is not bound to mankind first, but to other powers, as a slave has to have regard for another slave out of respect to his master and for the sake of obedience." An ethical sermon must be independent of such pre-suppositions. For "what I do for the sake of some transcendental being, and because of punishment and reward which he may bestow, makes me only indirectly bound to my fellow-men, and points out to me, in the first place, that I must look out for myself, and only as a means to egoistic ends may I look out for those whom I recognise as like myself." Over against such a view we must declare "that a deeper and more earnest morality, not only can, but must be independent of every religious presupposition." Preachers must be the moral teachers of the people—the people includes everybody—the holy task of the preacher is to watch over the moral excellence of the people, and to combat the evil which is continually springing up in all departments of life if it is not daily rooted out. That these teachers on their part, must fulfil the commandment of intellectual sincerity, and dare not teach anything which contradicts science, goes without saying. Long before this process of transformation of which we have been speaking shall be completed, a desire which Kant entertained will, without doubt, be fulfilled in all civilised states: that of moral instruction in schools, not founded upon theology and not mixed with it. "Almost everywhere," says Kant, in his remarks upon pedagogy, "there is lacking in our schools something which would greatly advance the education of children in uprightness of life, namely, a catechism of the right." "If we had such a book, an hour could be with great use devoted daily to instructing the children in the ways of life. . . . It would be of the greatest importance in education," says Kant in his "*Metaphysic of Ethic*," "not to present the moral catechism mixed up with the religious catechism, still less not to let the former follow upon the latter; but always, and with the greatest attention to details, to bring the former into the clearest light possible. For, without this, religion will become nothing but the hypocrisy of confessing duties from fear, and so falsely profess that which is not in the heart."

*(5.) Prayer.*

That rationally thoughtful men give up petition is a step forward ; their worth, their power, and their happiness are increased by the awakening consciousness of their own single responsibility, by the consciousness that no heavenly power is to bring about a kingdom of righteousness. Men talk of the peace and rest which prayer brings. But do not men find also the "feeling of Peace" when they direct the full energy of their spirit toward humanity, and without prayer dedicate themselves to its service? Yes, is not the blessedness which accompanies prayer often simply the joyful consciousness of having given one's self up to what is good? Is not this "the inner witness" which bestows consolation upon men? By giving our whole heart to mankind we bring peace to our own soul.

But will not the ardour of action be weakened if faith, trust, and hope be taken away? This question has been asked us. But who will take these away? Faith, love, and hope remain always—trust, faith, the most trusting love, the noblest hope: faith in the power of good that is in men, in which there is only too seldom any confidence, to which only too seldom any appeal is made—it is not true that man is as bad as Luther and many of the Church fathers have represented ; these men were unbelievers as regards mankind ;—love for all mankind, even for generations yet unborn ; hope that a glorious future is in store for them. And just as religious men have been strengthened by the thought "that one with God is a majority," so does the certain truth strengthen us that one in a good cause has great power. It was to men that the leaders of the Anti-Slavery movement in America cried out ; it was to their conscience that these leaders appealed, and the awakened heart of America was able by its faith to remove more than mountains.

*(6.) The Anchor of the Soul.*

"What is the anchor of your soul?" is a question which the disciples of the old faith put to those of the new. "What is your con-

solation in sorrow? Wherein do you find resignation when you have failed?" And then with hesitation they add: "Can mere cold morality ever deliver men?" Scarcely can anyone who has been really earnest in thinking of pure morality have entertained this doubt—it may be that people understand by mere morality simply the ten commandments of Moses. But morality is not cold, it is a source of enthusiasm! What, in truth, does it mean? Nothing short of a sanctified life and a glorified earth. The answer to the question, What gives believers in Ethical religion strength and consolation in life? is simply the one old answer: Duty and Love! Love, answers also the believer in mere morality, love, an all comprehending love, brings consolation in the midst of tears; duty gives us strength to bear suffering, and makes life valuable. The consciousness of duty done is the only real consolation in life and in death. "For those who have a true conception of life," says Sheldon, "an unflinching purpose, an unflinching will, there is no such thing as defeat. For them it is always possible to turn one kind of defeat into another kind of victory." For there is no situation in life in which a man might not attain his highest good by regulating his thoughts, words, and deeds so as to serve mankind. There is one hope, one confidence, one fixed assurance: inward peace, and by doing what will bring us that, we cause others also to find it. The example of a noble patience and of glad denial is indeed a powerful, beneficent energy. The state of mind of pious Christians has often not been enviable. Religious fears which, from childhood on, have served as a means of education, have often darkened the whole life. In Luther's Table Talks the name of the devil appears perhaps more often than that of God—and Luther's state of mind in these years seems to be correspondingly gloomy. The Pantheists, Spinoza and Goethe, and the Atheists, Bentham and Feuerbach, were, without doubt, more serene and happy; and it is not perceptible that those persons who still cling to small half-beliefs, to remnants of the Christian creed, thereby find peace and gladness.

To the question how a man can find forgiveness and reconciliation when he has done wrong, we may, in the first place, answer, that



in many cases complete forgiveness should not be found. George Eliot says : " I hate that talk of people, as if there was a way of making amends for everything. They had more need to be brought to see that the wrong they do can never be altered. When a man has spoiled his fellow-creature's life, he has no right to comfort himself with thinking good may come out of it ; somebody else's good does not alter her shame and misery. It is well we should feel that life is a reckoning we cannot make twice over ; there is no real making amends in this world, any more than you can mend a wrong subtraction by doing your addition right." But although there cannot always be complete forgiveness of sins, nevertheless, the inner punishment may be made easier, and the way to do so is by right action, by work for human welfare. " Work delivers from sin." Whoever has sinned, let him sin no more, but work and bring about good. The old teaching that the Church by its power could forgive sins was highly injurious to mankind. Clifford calls it treason against humanity. He says : " The Catholic priest professes to act as an ambassador for his God, and to absolve the guilty man by conveying to him the forgiveness of heaven. If his credentials were ever so sure, if he were indeed the ambassador of a superhuman power, the claim would be treasonable. Can the power of the Czar make guiltless the murderer of old men, women and children in Circassian valleys ? Can the pardon of the Sultan make clean the bloody hands of a Pasha ? As little can any God forgive sins committed against man. When men think he can, they compound for old sins which the God did not like by committing new ones which he does like. Many a remorseful despot has atoned for the levities of his youth by the persecution of heretics in his old age. That frightful crime, the adulteration of food, could not possibly be so common amongst us if men were not taught to regard it as merely objectionable because it is remotely connected with stealing, of which God has expressed his disapproval in the Decalogue ; and therefore as quite naturally set right by a punctual attendance at church on Sundays. When a Ritualist breaks his fast before celebrating the Holy Communion,

his deity can forgive him if he likes, for the matter concerns nobody else ; but no deity can forgive him from preventing his parishioners from setting up a public library and reading-room for fear they should read Mr. Darwin's works in it. That sin is committed against the people, and a God cannot take it away."

(7.) *Theology and Love for Mankind.*

Does the mixing up of theology with morals tend to increase love for mankind? Certainly no one could say that it is so in the case of the old barbaric religions. To the most ancient gods, no other sacrifice was so pleasant as human blood. Thousands upon thousands of men were yearly slaughtered upon their altars to their honour. This sacrifice was not enough for them, men must also seek the blood of all who did not worship the same gods. "Spare thou not, but slay both men and women, infant and suckling!" This command was current as a divine one. "Religion could advise so much of evil!" cried out Lucretius, as he looked about upon its effects. At last a religion appeared which said that God is love. But has it made men richer in love? Ought men to love those who hate God! "To love them would be to hate God who punishes them; it is absolutely necessary either to convert them or to inflict pain upon them." "Thus," as Shaftesbury says, "provinces and nations were divided. . . . in order to create the strongest aversion possible among persons of a like species. For when all other animosities are allayed, and anger of the fiercest kind appeased, the religious hatred, we find, continues still as it began, without provocation or voluntary insult."

But some affirm that love for mankind cannot be developed without theology; in answer to this we call attention to the proof of a noted theologian of the present day that the moral process can develop, not only independently of the religious, but has actually so developed in history. "Trade and commerce, traditions and laws," says William Bender in his work on the "Essence of Religion," "follow the courses which are prescribed them in the nature of things and in the relation of races; and religion has everywhere come afterwards. . . . The development of a universal

morality is not the product of a religion, but, on the contrary, it can be proved that morality has exercised a great transforming effect upon religion. . . . That the churchly organised religion has made more difficult the process of widening special race-consciousness into a consciousness of humanity, and national love into universal human love, is proved, not only by the struggle which Jesus made against the Israelitish religion in favour of that higher moral principle, but also by the continuous strife of the different churches, which, like the ancient national religions that practised the law of love only within national limits, have practised it only within the limits of their special confession of faith. . . . The moral ideal of humanity in Christendom has not been introduced by the Church into our modern life. The recognition of a universal law of morality, the law of human love as it becomes individualised in the duties of justice, veracity, faithfulness and sacrifice, this recognition is due to the social intercourse of different races, which thereby discover the essential equality of human nature, of its interests and aims, of its endowments and aspirations, its work and products."

(8.) *Theology and Sincerity.*

The influence of theology upon the development of human love has not been, as it seems to us, favourable. How has it been related, let us now ask, to sincerity and intellectual honesty—to morality of speech, of belief and thought? Let us in the first place bring to mind what the highest consciousness of our times now declares concerning these virtues.

Man has gradually learned to recognise the value of truthfulness, and the conviction is shared now by almost all scientific investigators, which Schopenhauer expresses in these words: "Although it has often been said that man should search after truth, even where no use can be seen to come from it, because the utility may be indirect and can appear where men had not expected it; nevertheless, I find that this must be added, that men ought just as much to strive to discover and root out every

error, even where no injury can be seen to come from it, because the injury also may be very indirect, and can make its appearance first where men least expect it ; for every error contains within it poison. If it is reason, if it is knowledge, which makes man the lord of the earth, then there can be no harmless errors, still less no worthy or inviolable errors." "Every error unfortunately brings about more harm than good." Schopenhauer here speaks of truths and errors which concern all mankind. Surely for mankind, even if not for each individual, in all cases is truth both light and life ; error, darkness and death. For the individual under certain circumstances the words may hold good, that "only error is life and knowledge is death." Thus may a father who is happy in thinking that his son has founded a settled home in a strange land be brought to death by learning the truth, that his son has perished in misery. But even for individuals these are only exceptional cases, which no more prove the general usefulness than the circumstance that a man's blindness has once proved advantageous to him, shows that the blind man is better off than one who sees. If things have effects which touch the happiness and life of mankind, it must be a matter of life and death that men have correct views of these things. How often has an error on the part of a physician, a judge, a sailor, a general or a prince, brought death to individuals or to thousands. If a proof is required that every truth is useful to mankind and every error harmful, we have simply to look to the experience of mankind during the past.

From this important fact in relation to the happiness and life of man arises the obligation of sincerity and intellectual honesty. Truthfulness in the narrower sense consists in the agreement of our words with our thoughts. In not saying anything except what we mean, and in not keeping back important information, which he who trusts to our word has a right to expect to hear from us. A scientific investigator who describes an object, let it be a country, or a portion of history, or a philosophical system, his own or another's, disappoints the confidence placed in him and sins against truthfulness, not only if he deceives directly, but

also if he keeps silent about essential truths, just as a witness is guilty of perjury who does not tell the whole truth. We ought fearlessly and faithfully to stand for the truth we have found, and not shrink when our own self-interest is thereby damaged; he would be a bad witness whom the fear of revenge on the part of the defendant should induce to keep important matters secret. In the wider sense truthfulness includes also intellectual honesty or conscientiousness. A witness who does not exert himself to the utmost to state only what he has really seen, in order that he may not give out his own inferences and fancies as immediate perceptions, and who represents that which he does not any longer distinctly remember as if he was certain of it, exposes himself to the danger of perjury through negligence; and a judge, who instead of hearing both sides and examining impartially the evidence brought forward by both, hastily decides either for the plaintiff or the defendant, deserves to lose his position and to be punished severely. The like holds good for us all. We should all take to heart the word of Matthias Claudius spoken to his son: "The truth does not adapt itself to us, my son, but we must adapt ourselves to it." We must examine whether we have sufficient grounds for our beliefs; we are responsible for our views; and he who neglects to examine conscientiously those of his beliefs which affect human weal, sins against mankind, and he sins the more in proportion as he tries to spread them among men without having first seriously tested them. And since we know that to err is human we must also, even if we have attained well-founded convictions, keep our eyes and ears open to instruction, and be ready to change, or give up, our views as soon as new knowledge demands it; we must not be tempted to hold fast to opinion merely because we have held it before, any more than we must give arsenic instead of sugar because we once mistook it for sugar.

What is the relation of theology to the duty of truthfulness? This is Lecky's judgment: "The voice of conscience . . . may be perverted. When, for example, theologians during a long period have inculcated habits of credulity, rather than habits of enquiry;

when they have persuaded men that it is better to cherish prejudice than to analyse it ; better to stifle every doubt of what they have been taught than honestly to investigate its value, they will at last succeed in forming habits of mind that will instinctively and habitually recoil from all impartiality and intellectual honesty. If men continually violate a duty they may at last cease to feel its obligation." "The growth both of political and philosophical veracity has been unnaturally retarded by the opposition of theologians, who, while exercising a very beneficial influence in many spheres of morals, have in this proved as formidable adversaries to progress, for they made it during many centuries a man's object to suppress all writings opposed to their views, and when this power had escaped their grasp they proceeded to discourage in every way impartiality of mind and judgment, and to associate it with the notion of sin."

In a word, they have represented a vice as a virtue and a virtue as a vice. Typical is their conduct toward Giordano Bruno, who first among philosophers grasped the truth of the Copernican theory and drew the conclusion therefrom of a plurality of inhabited worlds. As his teaching, defended with all the warmth of his enthusiastic nature, differed from the traditional belief, the Roman inquisition took possession of him and threw him into prison. Fifty times he was subjected to the painful question ; the last torture lasted forty hours. Upon the insistence of the executioner that he should deny his errors upon oath—that is, declare that he held to be false what he saw to be true—he replied : "How can you demand that a torture which lasts for hours can be right over against a whole life of study and research?" After seven years of imprisonment he was condemned to death by fire, and on the 17th February, 1600, was burned at Rome. He said to his judges that they pronounced the judgment with greater fear than he received it. His death was terrible, repeatedly he called out as the flames burned slowly : "More wood, pile on more wood !" The last words of this martyr were : "To be burned does not mean to be refuted !" Unnumbered thousands of the most enlightened minds, of the

most powerful and brave intellects, have been persecuted in the interests of theology; and the intellectual character of whole nations had been lowered by this repression of the mentally fittest. This destruction of a great part of the intellectual aristocracy of mankind affected also its moral energies, for the martyrs to truth were not only distinguished for intellect, but also for moral excellence. Did they not possess that courage which scorns death? Had they denied, not their self-interest but the truth, they would have escaped punishment; and they would have attained to high worldly influence if they had renounced their honesty and placed their mental energy at the service of the ruling powers.

Science accustoms men only to accept as true either what is immediately perceived or what is necessarily inferred from immediate knowledge; it accustoms men to impartiality and counteracts their natural but pernicious tendency to believe without proof what is pleasant or self-advantageous, and it conducts them to the belief, based on all our experiences, that a fixed connection of causes and effects exists everywhere. The blessings which science has brought mankind, consist not only in its visible and tangible fruits, not only in the improvement it has caused in industry and commerce, but they extend over our whole mental being; they are especially evident in driving out superstition and credulity of all kinds, which produce such manifold mischief. Just the opposite of this has been the influence of the old theologies; they have demanded faith in something neither self-evident nor capable of proof, they have destroyed belief in the uniformity of natural events; and in proportion as their requirements have been fulfilled they have prevented a scientific discipline of the understanding, and have opened the door to credulity. When ministers of religion blame a man if he seeks by honest thinking to establish truths which touch the deepest interests of mankind, and encourage the inclination to believe without sufficient grounds that which some one of position or power tells him, or that which is pleasant to him, they strengthen the tendency in all other departments of knowledge:

in politics, political economy, in trade, in personal conduct, to take the most comfortable way, and abstain from careful investigation.

(9.) *Theology and the Standard of Moral Worth.*

Reason and conscience are the highest energies in us, and the highest in the whole world of our experience. They tell us that the mere having of certain religious beliefs is not a virtue, and that the mere lack of certain beliefs is not an immorality; but that the seeking for truth alone is virtuous, and contempt for truth is vice. In case a man comes to the conclusion, after sincere search for truth and nothing but truth, that there is no God, we may pity him but cannot condemn him, and neither could a God of truth and justice. What should we think of a man who tortured others because they were unable to believe that he existed? Shaftesbury entertained a worthier notion of the deity when he wrote to a young theologian, "Whilst you seek truth you cannot offend the God of truth."

Atheism, or godlessness, has been looked upon as of like significance with absence of all morality. But here there is simply a confounding of two distinct things. The sacredness of morality is uninfluenced by the doctrine either that there is, or is not a God; it rests as little upon theism as it does upon atheism.

Theologians by ascribing merit to corrupt things, and by stamping as a crime what is either morally indifferent or good, have degraded the standard of moral worth. "We regard as certain," says Luther, "that a man without the Holy Ghost is in God's eye godless, although he is adorned with all the virtues of all the heathen, and has done all their good works." Thus respect for real virtues, and recoil from real crimes is weakened. "Man of honour or worthless villain, what does it matter provided I go to mass?" Rousseau says that we must not think that this way of looking at conduct is peculiar to catholics; it belongs to every religion which regards intellectual faith instead of action as the essential thing. To go to church regularly, or to



offer a hundred prayers, or undertake a pilgrimage is easier than to do right. But if the fulfilment of religious duties is the means of attaining eternal blessedness, if theological virtues are more excellent than moral virtues, then many a believer will be less careful in his duty toward men. And when a man once perceives that certain actions are given out as meritorious, and others are condemned without any moral ground, he will often be inclined to regard all moral distinctions as unreal.

(10.) *Moral Progress.*

Not at all enviable is the state of mind of those who barter their inward sincerity for a half-faith in doctrines which cannot be proved, but which need proof. The discovery that moral science appears to be in contradiction with the creeds, makes such persons distrustful of science, and at times anxious for their creeds. These recurring intellectual attacks, the fear that the creed upon which they fancy the salvation of their soul depends may suffer shipwreck, brings them proportionate unrest and pain. Their inward repose is often destroyed when in conversation or in reading they meet with contradiction to their religious views. They feel a recoil against those who disturb their quiet, but that does not bring them the desired peace. He who gives himself up fully to the stream of mental progress, and places his reason and conscience against all else, he who regards straightforwardness and frankness a duty when the most sacred things are questioned, he is lifted above the disturbances of anxious believers. His thoughts concerning life and the universe are not in contradiction with the truth. In his mental life there is integrity ; his feelings are not dependent upon that which has no intellectual basis. It is true he does not enjoy those half-sensuous excitements which a believer may experience in his relations with a magical world ; he is also free from the disturbances which a ghostly conception of things produces. And he has the proud and pure consciousness of complete sincerity.

Even towards his own children he carries out the command-

ment of honesty, and does not deceive their loving confidence. He does not permit their noblest feelings to be subject to mere fancies, but directs their sentiments toward the true and good. How could mankind advance if the new generation always was to take with it on its life's journey all the belongings of the old? The children of those who are fearlessly honest will not have to suffer the mental torture which has heretofore driven many to the verge of despair. The struggle between the views, on the one hand, of ancient Palestine and the middle ages, and those, on the other, of the nineteenth century, will be spared them; they will not need to spend their noblest mental energy in freeing themselves from the old and the dead; and since their moral ideas will not have been connected with doctrines that cannot be proved, they will never be exposed to the moral damages involved in a change of one's fundamental beliefs. The courageous thinker knows that also in morality mankind has not remained stationary for eighteen hundred years, but that in this province also discoveries have been made, and ideals have been developed to a higher grade. Although he may recognise Jesus as the greatest of moral leaders, still he does not regard him as all-sufficient and infallible. The morals taught by Jesus need to be supplemented by the ethics of Greek and Roman sages, and need to be improved and corrected in accordance with the new experiences of two thousand years. In it we hear much of love, gentleness, and mercy, but too little of justice, which would make the greater part of mercy superfluous. In the teaching of the Son of Man the actualisation of justice is left for the Father in heaven to do. To him and not to human energy was Jesus' faith and trust directed. "My kingdom is not of this world." This world did not claim his greatest interest, and, therefore, was not adequately appreciated in his ethics. It was left unchanged in its fundamental features—with its slavery, its political despotism, its exploiting of the weak by the strong, its subjection of women; of patriotism, of political responsibilities, of the commandment to protect them and fight bravely for them, of the significance of labour, of personal worthiness, of the duties of intellectual conscientiousness, of hopes for the progress of

mankind, of all these his sermons contained nothing. Their general spirit is opposed to Kant's commandment: "Do not let your rights be trampled underfoot by others." All too little did they tend to counteract priestly fanaticism and worldly tyranny. No, not behind us, but before us, lies the perfect.

(II.) *The People and the Creeds.*

"If a thing is true," says Clifford, "let us all believe it, rich and poor, men, women, and children. If a thing is untrue, let us all disbelieve it, rich and poor, men, women, and children. Truth is a thing to be shouted from the house-tops."

There are persons (and they are numerous), who say that the doctrines of established religions are indeed fanciful; but that is a fact to be known only by the educated; the doctrines must be preserved for the people. To the average man those errors are said to be wholesome, for through them alone will he remain satisfied in his hard-pressed lot, and often they are the only thing which keeps him back from crime. Without religion the present order of society, it is said, could not exist. Our previous investigations have shown what is to be thought of such opinions. We have not been considering the educated man or the average man, but man as such; what holds good concerning man holds good of both the educated and the uneducated. We find also in this department the conviction justified which, according to Mill, is that of the best men, that no belief which is contrary to truth can be useful.

It is nevertheless worth while that we should examine more closely the opinion, that, for the people, belief must be preserved. He who accepts the traditional belief and holds it to be true after he has conscientiously examined it, does nothing else than his duty if he attempts to spread it; although he ought to be prudent and careful in the choice of his means. But we have here in mind those who regard the established religion as erroneous, and, nevertheless, give their support to it. To such persons to say that the creed must be preserved for the people means that the

people must be kept in superstition. The people, therefore, in their holiest convictions, in the highest concerns of the human mind, must be deceived! For themselves, for the educated, (that is, as a rule, for the richer members of society), there is to be no deception; for them truth exists; but for others, for the uneducated, for the common people, falsehood is good, error concerning things in which men ought to put their highest confidence!

Hear what Immanuel Kant says as to "whether it is good and advisable to let prejudices remain and even to favour them? It is astonishing that in our age such questions, especially that as to the favouring of prejudices, can still come up. 'To be favourable to anyone's prejudices means to deceive him with a good intention. To let prejudices remain would perhaps be permissible; for who can busy himself with discovering and overthrowing everyone's prejudices? But whether it would not be advisable to do all in our power to remove them, that is another question. Old and deeply-rooted prejudices are indeed hard to combat, because they are their own defendant and their own judge at the same time. Persons seek to excuse their non-interference with prejudices by saying that disadvantages would arise. But let the disadvantages arise, in the end they will bring so much the more good." "I admit that I cannot accept the expression which many wise men use, namely, that a certain people (which is in the act of preparing legal freedom) is not ripe for freedom; the serfs of the soil on a certain estate are not yet ripe for freedom, and in the same way also men in general are not yet ripe for freedom of belief. But according to such a supposition freedom will never come; because men cannot grow ripe for it if they are not previously bred into freedom (a man must be free in order to be able to use his energies suitably in freedom). The first attempt, it is true, will generally be crude and connected with a condition more violent and more dangerous than when the men were still under the commands but also under the care of others; but no one ever grows ripe for freedom except by his own attempts (and in order to dare to make this he must be free) . . . To lay it down

as a principle that freedom in general is not suitable for those who have once been subjected to intellectual trammels, and that a man is justified in postponing freedom, is a violation of the decrees of the deity himself, who created man for freedom."

Those remarkable friends of mankind who oppose freedom divide society into two castes, of which one, the privileged minority, possess a secret doctrine, the knowledge of which is hidden from the other, and they declare that the existing order of society can be maintained only in this way. But were this really the case, the days of such a society would be numbered. If it can only be preserved by falsehood and deception, it is already in a state of dissolution, and does not deserve to exist longer. But what is the existing order of society? Is that which exists the best possible? Do we desire to become a second China? Continually new laws are made and old ones repealed, and thereby the existing order is always being changed. But if by this expression is meant the fundamental constitution of the present society, the first question then would be whether it is just, whether it accords with the genuine welfare of all. If this is not the case every conscientious man will admit that it should be transformed. If it is the case we may be sure that the recognition of its wholesomeness is a better support for it than fictions and fancies can be.

The conduct of those people who would have for themselves and their class the truth and give falsehood to the people is very dangerous. In these days far less than in the last century is it permitted for the educated to enclose themselves with a Chinese wall, over which their secrets may not escape; it would be impossible to prevent the people from detecting the deception, and the people might easily imagine that the wish to keep them in error and ignorance by means of falsehood and hypocrisy betrayed the disposition of oppressors, and that it would be in accordance with justice to meet such an attempt with punishment. Those who play in this matter with the religion of the people ought to bethink themselves what responsibilities they are assuming.

No, he who being genuinely benevolent deliberates upon these things, he to whom the decisive factor is not the interest of his

own class but that of the whole people, will perceive that social salvation can only consist in spreading knowledge, insight, and the capacity to think, and in removing everything in political institutions which conflicts with this aim. Most dangerous are regulations which attach punishment to the investigation and promulgation of truth, and set a reward upon hypocrisy. The systematic cultivation of a superstitious spirit is pernicious in every respect ; it makes the people stupid and immoral, it destroys reciprocal trust and the feeling of community. The nation in which such a system predominates must in the struggle for existence with other nations succumb. No error remains alone, but attaches others to itself. To engraft errors artificially, so that they shall appear ultimately as true, is only to injure the healthy power of thinking. For a people to get accustomed to suppressing their best convictions destroys all honesty. Let men renounce the attempt to preserve a form of faith which, perhaps, centuries ago united men, but which is not compatible with the present state of knowledge ; let men follow the commandment of sincerity and intellectual uprightness. Let men educate the young morally and develop their knowledge of the highest ideals, without trying to support their morality with statements that cannot be proved ; then reciprocal trust and a unified life will arise in the community and will make each individual man strong, true and faithful. Evil will be the consequences, if throughout the people the opinion becomes fixed that everything in the state depends upon a few articles of faith, and if natural and direct motives to right conduct are not called into activity ; for in spite of all regulations to prevent it, the knowledge will become general that the assumed doctrines are unfounded. Who doubts that in classical antiquity, patriotism was one of the most powerful springs to action ? But it was not founded in the religious belief of the people. Aristides and Pericles could never have made the statement attributed to a modern statesman of renown : "How a man without faith in a revealed religion, in God who wills the good, in a higher judge and a future life, can do his duty in an orderly way, and leave to every man his own, I cannot conceive." In ancient Greece men did not love their country for the sake of God.

It is said, that as a great majority of the people must work hard almost all day long, they are incapable of undertaking such mental work as leads the educated to correct traditional ideas. To this we answer, in the first place, that there is no necessity in the nature of things for the great majority of our race to renounce its distinguishing mark, the faculty of thought, and work the whole day long only with muscles—we may hope that in the not distant future, in civilised states, with the progress of machinery, all manual labourers will have more leisure ; as already in America the eight hour movement points towards successful issue. In the second place we reply, that a true doctrine may be brought to the support of virtue authoritatively, that is, merely on faith, and that doctrines thus taught will be more efficient than those which give way before deeper thought and investigation. Even the most educated men accept on mere faith the truths of astronomy without knowing the grounds for the teachings ; but no one says that on that account a man ought to believe the Ptolemaic system rather than the Copernican ; and all the results of social, moral, and religious science, are equally capable of being taught authoritatively. Just as you say of a child without trying to establish the fact: “God helps men;” so you can in the same way say to him : “No one will deliver mankind from suffering if men do not help one another; you must, therefore, devote all your energy to their welfare.” In the same way we can teach them, saying : “Love your fellow-men with your whole heart, for they have need of it, and no power in the world gives them love if men do not. Do not quiet your conscience with the thought that you shall live through all eternity ; your life has an end. The failures you have made here you can never atone for in another world ; live then so much the more seriously this one life ; love your neighbour before it is too late.”

And we would call the attention of those who regard religion as an auxiliary to the police for the prevention of crime, to the historical fact that a good police force is always more efficient in doing this work than religious belief. Such remote punishments as those in eternity do not generally make any impression upon

rude people, and so much the less impression the weaker the faith is. But even if this be strong, men find many means of escaping the threatened consequences of wrong-doing. Let the police force be supplemented by the watchfulness of society, which is only too often disposed to hand over the duty of protecting the innocent, and hindering injustice, and punishing evil-doers, to a superhuman providence.

(12.) *Retrospect.*

The conclusion we have reached is that morality is independent of theology, inasmuch as duty remains the highest, whether there be a God or no God. The moral law does not need a divine sanction. Even if there were a personal being who issued the moral commandments, nevertheless it would only be right to follow them, provided they were just ; and if a line of conduct is just, we must pursue it, even if no God has ordered us to do so. If we say that God is just, then justice must have a significance although God did not exist. The conception of justice and moral ideas in general do not spring out of our relation to a superhuman power, but out of our social life with men ; not only does religious faith originally have no connection with morality, but, in the higher stages of civilization, the development of the one in no wise corresponds to that of the other ; the degree of morality does not vary with religious ideas.

The notion that men will do right only from hope of future reward, or fear of future punishment, is in contradiction to the experience of all time which has found expression in the quite general belief that true virtue must be self-forgetful, and is not the same as far-sighted prudence. The idea of heaven and hell may easily produce a selfish disposition. And when the idea loses its hold upon the conviction, as it may easily do, the selfishness survives which, not being held in check by fear of what is after death, is liable to betray its utter meanness. It cannot be good to build upon anything of which we are uncertain. It is moreover not true that the idea of death, as the real end of existence, is intolerable to the human spirit. Love and duty overcome death. Yes, death being the condition of the renewal of life it is friendly to morality, and



the thought of it sanctifies life. Death, besides, does not destroy us entirely, because the effects of our conduct continue to live.

We do not need the motive of love and reverence toward God in order to make us upright. The original object of these feelings is man ; it is good human qualities which are wont to be ascribed afterwards to God ; and the conception of him has become more ideal in proportion as men have become nobler. It is not necessary to imagine these qualities as existing in heaven in order to appreciate their worth ; and care must be taken lest in our zeal to trace all blessings to this or that founder of religion, we do not prove ungrateful or unjust toward parents, friends, teachers, and thousands of human benefactors. And as we do not love and respect father, children, and friends for God's sake, so if our moral consciousness be enlightened, we shall entertain direct love and respect for our country and mankind. Where the conception of God's omnipresence is lacking, the idea of God in us, the inward witness, may still exist, and to its support comes the remembrance of good men. The consciousness of moral responsibilities does not consist in thinking that a God will torture us in another world if we do wrong, but in the certainty of being subject to the judgment of our own conscience. This feeling is strengthened by the thought that no superhuman power will carry out our highest wishes for us ; the consciousness arises that we alone must be creators of the kingdom of righteousness, if it is ever to appear. "Human reason and human conscience without any reference to God are the judge of right and wrong, of good and evil ; they are themselves the law, and are sufficient by their natural energies to establish the well-being of men and of nations."

Supernaturalism has seen its day. Even morality is getting free from it, and will be the stronger for so doing, as has been the case with the sciences which have shaken off all elements of the supernatural. We need churches which will have faith in man and in his power to do good by his own free energies, without force or hopes of another world ; we need churches which will build up man's inner moral life without the assistance of unfounded dogmas.

God, conceived as the creator of heaven and earth, or as the essential power which holds the world together, does not need us, but we men need the whole undivided energy of our hearts to purify the earth from all the evils and badness which grow up in it, and to establish the social ideal. Our God is only the good in man. To console ourselves with the thought of the glories of heaven instead of perfecting the earth, and thus bringing salvation to our soul, is wrong. The ideal of right is not a thing for quiet contemplation, its banner gleams only in the front ranks of the joyful battle.

The giving-up of the belief in another world tends to lift a man's character. It is better to find one's blessedness through action, than through adoration. A man's dignity, power, and happiness are diminished by petitioning a supernatural power. Faith, hope, and love will continue, but it will be moral faith, moral hope, and moral love.

The history of supernaturalism does not show that it has increased human love. Theological hate is the strongest; more than any it has spread woe among men. Theological beliefs have sown discord, and still more have they done violence to sincerity and intellectual honesty by declaring credulity to be a virtue, and the honest search for truth a crime. Our conscience and our reason tell us that it is neither meritorious nor blameworthy either to have or not to have certain religious ideas, that only to be straightforward, to respect and follow the truth is virtuous, and that only insincerity and contempt for the truth is vicious.

The good man who is conscious of his uprightness, and seeks comfort only in that truth which natural experience offers him, does not envy the old-fashioned type of believer, for he is satisfied with his own outlook. He not only preaches sincerity to his children, but practises it toward them by not declaring anything to them to be certain which he does not himself believe or know, and his children will be thankful for such treatment. He looks with trust toward the future, believing that the perfect lies not behind but before us; he is glad in the hope that his life will be used as a building-stone in the City of Light.

## CHAPTER X.

### NATURE AND MORALITY.

" We can only say of love,—  
Not that it is supreme in the world,  
But let love animate all ! "

W. M. SALTER.

#### (1.) *Living according to Nature.*

ETHICS, men say, does not rest, to be sure, upon theology, but nevertheless it needs a metaphysical basis ; for it pre-supposes that human life has an object, an aim, a task, therefore a teleological view of the world—the doctrine that the world, as a whole, is ordered according to purposes—is the necessary foundation of a science of ethics ; if we would know how our life is to be directed, we must determine first what nature has prescribed peculiarly for man, what a life according to nature is.

The principle of living according to nature arose out of the school of Socrates. Under the influence of certain teachings of his master, Plato developed the view that as the eye and the ear have a work or function peculiar to themselves which only they can perform, namely, to see and to hear, and as they each have their own excellence, which consists in their performing their work well, so likewise the soul of man has its proper task to perform ; and its excellence, its virtue, consists in executing its work well. Aristotle made this thought the basis of his system. Can it be possible, he asked, that the carpenter and the bridle-maker have their proper tasks, but that man, as man, has no task peculiar to himself which nature appointed him ? Or must we not much rather believe that just as every single member of the human body

—the eye, the hand, the foot—has its special arrangement, so also the whole man, as such, has his characteristic task? That this question must be answered in the affirmative Aristotle regards as self-evident; and he finds that task of man for which he was seeking to be rational activity. Aristotle would, therefore, have had no objection to make if any one had said that he demanded life according to nature—that is, according to the purpose of nature, although he himself did not express his teachings in that way. On the contrary, this formula “living according to nature,” is found in Plato’s pupil, Xenocrates, as well as in the Cynics. It became a peculiar watchword of the Stoics; the Epicureans also liked to make use of it. Almost all ancient moralists were agreed in demanding life according to nature, although they, without doubt, had very different notions of what was according to nature.

This way of looking at the matter rests upon a teleological view of the world, but when such a view is brought into real definiteness of thought, it reveals itself to be nothing else than a theological view of the world. Of this we shall be convinced if we analyse the conception of a purpose in nature.

(2.) *Analysis of the Conception of an End in Nature.*

What is an end in general? We understand by it an effect presented to the mind and willed, which we cannot bring about immediately, but only through a line of causes. These causes of an anticipated and willed effect we name the means to the end. These also, although only indirectly, are willed, because only through them is the end attainable, and so if an end can be realized only through a long chain of causes, every link of the chain can become itself a subordinate end, in so far as it is anticipated and willed, and is actualized through other links of causation; but the ultimate end to which the relative mediate ends are subordinate, is customarily called the final end. Whatever is necessary to the realization of a given end we call a means; while anything not necessary is not a means.

The processes which lead up to an end are sometimes represented as if in them causal sequence were inverted, since the last effect appears as the first condition, and the future seems to determine the present ; in this sense the end would be called the final cause, since it causes the beginning. But this is a senseless presentation of the matter, for a future thing, a thing which does not yet exist, cannot yet have any effect. In truth the course of causes and effects is not interrupted in means to an end any more than in any other process. If a man pictures success to himself and tries to achieve it, the picture is not a future but a present fact, and the end is not attained by the action of the future upon the present, but by the effect of the past on the present.

Means to an end are therefore causal events, in which an act of the understanding and of the will is a part ; an effect can only then be designated an end when we suppose a will to be directed towards it. And in like manner a cause can only then be called a means when it is regarded as the cause of something willed. If we disregard this subjective side there remains simply the causal connection, and we can only speak of the causes, and the effects, and the working together of the various causes in bringing about the given effects, but cannot speak of means and ends. The designation of a thing as an end is in truth not a special logical category ; the conception of an end is not a conception of the pure understanding, but is complex ; in it the thought of causality is bound together with the notion that a will is one of the causes. What is the *additional* thing which transforms an *effect* into an *end* ? Is it anything else than the willing of that end ? When we say : " I do this and this, in order that that and that may happen," what else do we mean than to say that " I do this because it has that as an effect, and I wish to bring that about ? " Would the expression, " in order that," have had any meaning if the idea of willing the effect had been left out of account ?

The conclusion is that there are ends in nature within the kingdom of man and the higher animals ; since men, and also to a certain, though much lower, degree the animals construct

notions of events which they strive to actualize through their own activity; but one can only then speak of ends which universal nature pursues, when nature is regarded as a rational and volitional being, or as the creation of such a being.

But, according to all our experiences, to have mental conceptions and to will, presupposes a highly developed nervous system. But universal nature does not possess any such system; such a thing is found only in individual parts of nature, the higher animals. Scientifically it is not a justifiable hypothesis to believe in the existence of thought, volition, or any other phenomena of consciousness, not bound together with a centralized nervous system. Simply because such notions have been handed down to us from times in which there existed no science, or only the most meagre kind, is not a justifiable reason for accepting them, any more than the circumstance that for thousands of years witches, ghosts and magic were believed in, can be a reasonable ground for us to believe in them. The truth does not grow old. Man wills; let us settle what it is that he wills; but let us not set up a reduplication, let us not imagine another will, a universal will of nature, behind the volitions of the single living creature. The thought that the universe—a totality of lasting existences, and of infinitely manifold processes coming and going, disintegrating one another in a definite order, and resting upon the enduring substratum—the thought that the universe is not a thing self-existent, but manufactured by another, is an hypothesis which originated in pre-scientific times. The laws of thought in no way urge us to seek for the cause of the whole world, for the conception of cause is applicable only to changes in events, not to enduring existences and their qualities. The inquiry as to the cause of hydrogen, and as to the cause of its having just these and not other qualities, is without sense; we stand here in the presence of simple and final facts, and we must accept such if we do not wish to fall into an endless retrogression. If it were rational to ask for the cause of the world, or of one of its elements, we should then for the same reason have to seek for the cause of this cause, and so on. There is no good in making

a halt at any point whatever, if we do not take our stand that the world and its elements have a self-sufficient existence. Would the world really be any better explained if we place something else behind it? We should thereby attain only a new fact which, in turn, would demand explanation. The world rests best in itself; it seems to be no more secure when, as the Brahmin priests declare, it rests on an elephant. How inessential to human thought the assumption is that the world has been created, we see not only in the fact that some of the greatest philosophers, like Spinoza, Hume, Schopenhauer, and Dühring, have rejected it, but also in the circumstance that it is not found in Buddhism, which is reputed to have more followers than any other religion. Those who look upon this mighty and wonderful world as a self-sufficient unity do not regard it, as Darwin seemed to think, as a creation of chance or of necessity, but they regard it as simply not a creation. The world is beautiful and grand, and the more its glory is revealed, the more we will rejoice in it; but that is no proof that it was made beautiful and grand.

If we do not accept the doctrine of a universal creative intelligence, such statements as the following have no meaning: The appearance of consciousness in the world is the peculiar aim of existence and of the constitution of the elements;—for we must in some way explain the existence of consciousness. The universe has it at heart to bring forth consciousness in the richest fullness, it is embedded in the universal plan;—on the contrary, consciousness is simply a fact, just as the whole world is, and it does not need to be willed and created any more than the world.

The refusal to recognise ends in nature does not imply a denial of any of the facts upon which the teleological view of the world is accustomed to fall back for its justification. It simply denies the right to connect these facts with unjustifiable assumptions, and to fancy in things a will or an unconscious volition.

It is a fact, that gradually more and more of the inorganic stuffs of the earth have been transformed into organic shapes; this is a characteristic of the earth's development; but we dare not say that it is the end or aim of the earth's development, because we

cannot say that it has been willed. As soon as we call it an end we do not keep down to the fact, but entertain a pure assumption.

In the case of living beings no organ and no function exists which does not lead to the preservation of the individual or species, or, at least, which did not once lead to it. But no one can say that nature, in constructing organic beings, had this in view as its purpose: no one can say so, because no one has a right to read into nature a will. It is simply a characteristic of the elements of matter to unite under such and such conditions, into such and such combinations; but this characteristic is not willed by anybody, it is simply an indisputable fact; it is a characteristic of such and such combinations to grow through nourishment and to propagate themselves, that is, to give the quickening impulses to combinations like themselves. It is a fact that certain organic combinations fit the conditions of nature better, others worse, and that those which fit them better have a better prospect of being preserved; it is simply an identical proposition to say that characteristics which preserve life have as their effect the preservation of life. The qualities of the elements out of which organic combinations spring, and the relations which exist among them are the reasons why the beings have become exactly what they are and not something else. Nature is not trying to bring forth definite forms of types; for nature has no impulses and no mental pictures, no original types to which she refers in her working.

Zoology which treats of very complicated phenomena did not arrive at a knowledge of the causal relations which are found in its domain until after the simpler sciences of mechanics, astronomy, physics and chemistry were somewhat advanced; and so it is easy to understand why "the refuge of ignorance," the retreat to a creator of all things, was still sought in zoology long after it had ceased to be sought in the other sciences. Only then is God introduced, when all knowledge is at an end. The older zoologists used to believe that the remarkable adaptations in the structure of living beings made it necessary to infer an intelligent designer of the same. But even before men had attained the in-



sight which the theory of evolution affords us, they already saw that this inference was not well founded. For the creator of the world would have had to be created no less according to intelligent design than his best adapted creations, and if the mere adaptation implied that it was created, then the creator himself must have been created, and the creator of the creator and so on without end ; but the arrangements of nature, which serve the individual or the species, do not become less precious, when we give up the notion that they were made according to a purpose.

What seems adapted to an end is simply that which has, as an effect, the preservation of the individual life or that of the species. We men aim at the continuation of our existence, if it be not unbearable ; we do not simply live, but are accustomed to make life an end and, indeed, one of fundamental significance ; because without the realization of this end no other would be attainable ; without existence we cannot exist in health, wealth or virtue. And because, as a fact, life is for us an object of endeavour, we are justified in calling all our characteristics which contribute to the preservation of life, means to an end. And inasmuch as we carry over this relation to the animal, indeed, to the whole organic world in general, we are accustomed to designate all life-preserving characteristics in it as means to an end. But life is never an end with animals ; surely the conception of life never arises in their consciousness and can therefore never be the object of a voluntary act ; and the lowest animals have in general no ideas at all, but only sensations and perceptions ; they entertain therefore no purposes at all ; and still less may we speak of the aims of plants, as plants are quite without sensations. Therefore it is clear, so far as nature below man is concerned, that the designation of arrangements which preserve the life of lower animals and plants as means to an end is only metaphorical. It implies that life is aimed at, which in its proper sense holds good only in the case of human consciousness. Therefore if anyone wishes to avoid metaphorical expressions, instead of " means to an end," or " contrary to the end," he would have to say : " preservative of life " or " destructive of life," or to use some such expression.

And it would not be difficult to carry out this mode of speech. Without leaving a single fact undesignated, zoology, anatomy, physiology and psychology might omit entirely the words *purpose* and *means*.

These considerations lead to the conclusion that ethics cannot be founded on the teleological view of the world. The search after the meaning of the world, its aims, its plan, or after the task which nature, or the author of nature, has set for man, starts from an unfounded presupposition ; while ethics must have as its basis nothing but what is scientifically secured.

But setting the considerations aside which bar out the doctrine of ends in nature, and presupposing that that doctrine is scientifically justified, let us now examine whether the end in nature is fit to become the principle of ethics.

### (3.) *The Purpose of the Universe and our Moral Will.*

It may be well for a moment to imagine that we have discovered the universal purpose of the world. Two things would then be possible : either it would appear to us that this purpose accomplishes its design as a fate and with an inevitable and irresistible necessity, so that we should not be able to act against it by any means,—and then there would be no sense in making the actualization of this end, which was already actualizing itself, into a moral imperative ;—or, it would appear to us that this world-purpose might be interfered with. But why should we in this case seek to further it? If we supposed that the complete actualization of the world-purpose would thwart all our wishes and hopes, and all our moral inspirations, would we then set it up as an ethical imperative that we should serve this world-purpose? Verily, on the contrary we should regard it as our imperative duty, so far as it lay in our power, to prevent its actualization ; in proportion as we were moral we would work against it. Only then might we adopt the world's purpose as our own and work with it, when it appeared to us to be good ; in other words, when without knowing that we were furthering the design of the universe, we should nevertheless

have regarded the same course of action as right. What we ought to regard as good or bad, worthy or unworthy, and what our ideas of good are, depend upon our own nature, not upon anything else whatsoever. In ourself therefore, in our own heart and will, lies the final decision as to what we ought to strive for and what to avoid.

In fact, we see that what is according to nature is so far removed from being a self-evident ethical aim, that the early Christians looked upon what was natural as exactly that which enticed men to evil. In "German Theology" there occur the words: "Therefore are nature and Satan one." If we take the earlier Christianity as our guide, the moral commandment was not to live according to nature, but rather to work against and overcome it. The earlier Christians recognised a direct conflict between the natural and the moral, whereas the ancient Greeks presupposed a harmony between them. This difference was due to the fact that the Christians entertained a pessimistic, the Greeks an optimistic view of the universe. The final reason why the Greeks believed in conforming to the end in nature was not because it was an end in nature, but because in their opinion it was good; exactly in the same manner on the other hand the early Christians, and whoever adopted their opinion in this matter, have refused to submit to the purpose in nature because to these it seemed to be bad, and to contradict their moral convictions.

We have now arrived from another side to the conclusion that living according to nature cannot be a principle of ethics. But disregarding these considerations, let us now suppose it to be a sufficient ground for making the realization of any object a moral law, simply that it happens to be the end of universal nature.

#### (4.) *The Universal Aim of Nature as the Basis of Morals.*

What now may this general aim of nature be? If we compare the answers given to this question with one another, we find almost no agreement at all; but rather the most glaring opposition. And, what is more, those who accept such an end in nature often

admit that it cannot be proved with scientific exactness, but may claim for itself only a certain probability. But could anything that is so open to doubt be capable of serving as a foundation for that which is most important in life? A foundation is a thing which, if removed, the whole superstructure falls down. Now if we accept the end in nature set up by philosophical speculation and base the whole of ethics upon it, and if some philosopher should succeed in bringing forward decisive grounds against that end (and this has been the case in reference to every world-purpose that has been set up), then the whole of morality would be shattered to pieces. If such an end of nature were adopted and ethics founded upon it, one might well stand aloof from all further investigation of natural science and philosophy with alarm, for fear it might possibly undermine the basis of morality, and with the basis morality itself; and many a person might regard it as a desirable thing, on account of the transcendent importance of morality, to forbid all further investigations.

Morality is of the highest importance—this is generally acknowledged. Why? Because human happiness and misery, life and death, depend upon it. Now if this is the case, then happiness and misery, these tremendous realities, surely constitute a better foundation for morality than those doubtful results of doubtful speculation.

(5.) *Living according to Human Nature.*

Many philosophers have interpreted the command to live according to nature as meaning to live according to the nature of man. We must examine whether this imperative is better fitted to become the highest moral law than the imperative to follow universal nature.

But we must first ask what the word nature means here? If it means the totality of man's characteristics or powers, then clearly the worst actions are not less natural than the best: the former are not more miraculous than the latter, therefore the word nature cannot here be understood in this sense. Neither can it here

signify the opposite to what is seldom and unaccustomed; for then the highest moral excellence, in as much as it is very rare, would be something bad. "All things of highest quality are as seldom as they are difficult to attain."

Or may nature perhaps stand for that which is primitive, that which is earliest in time? Then characteristics which are in general the most highly prized, such as love of truth and universal benevolence—tardy phenomena in the history of humanity—would have to be suppressed. Whoever recognises the truth of the theory of biological development must from the very start see the absurdity of the notion that what is primitive must be best.

The words "nature" and "natural" seem capable of having only one other signification—namely, the opposite of "art" or "artificial." What now is "nature" in men, what "artificial?" It would seem that under "natural" was meant what had come about without the co-operation of man, and under "artificial" whatever was the product of human intelligence, purpose, deliberation, and education. The instinctive impulses would then be "natural," but that we ought not to give ourselves up to our blind desires, that they need to be guided and ruled by reflective thought, that society could not exist if every one always followed them, no one can avoid admitting; intelligence indeed would never have developed at all had it not been necessary for the existence of man. And if we examine the virtues, every one of them bears upon it the mark of being the result of work and discipline, a conquest wrung from nature; without discipline there would be no virtue. To become a good man is an art; much easier, more natural, is it to be selfish and domineering than to be just.

If we set out from the teleological view of the world, how arbitrary it would be to exclude the existence of society, education, and of national activity from the ends of nature. That would be simply making the existence of man a thing not in the purpose of nature, for without society there would be no language and no development of reason, and without language and reason man would be a beast.

But if finally it should be said that virtue is not life according to nature, but it is the true ideal, or the perfect and most highly-developed nature, it would be clear that simply words were being dealt with and nothing further stated than that we ought to act as we ought to act. For what is the true, the ideal, the perfect, the most highly-developed nature? Nature as it ought to be, and what this is, is just what we want to know.

But now some one will perhaps say we can very well determine what purposes the individual organs of man serve: the eye is for seeing, the hand for grasping, the foot for walking, and so on. But do we thereby learn whither we ought to go and where, where we should grasp and where not, under what circumstances we should speak and under what keep silent? And these alone are the questions the answers to which concern us, when we are looking for a guide to action.

Still some one will object: all the human organs and instincts tend to the preservation of the species, to strive for that then is quite natural; and this furnishes undoubtedly a perfectly clear, definite, ethical principle. But if the preservation of the species is a clear and definite principle, and if it really can be justified as the principle of morality, we might then set up as the moral principle, not the life according to nature, but the preservation of the species or the welfare of mankind; and if anyone asked what is right or wrong in the life of an individual or in social institutions, we need not then answer: what is according to nature is right, what is contrary is wrong; but rather we could say: whatever in its consequences is in general beneficial is right, whatever is pernicious is wrong. We would not say: selfishness is right or wrong because it is according to nature or contrary to it; but because it furthers the general welfare or checks it. We would not say, as Aristotle did, nature designed some men for slavery, and therefore it is right; or, as some other philosophers say, nature designed every one for freedom, and therefore slavery is wrong; but: the existence of slavery is right or wrong because it harmonizes or conflicts with the welfare of mankind.

The question as to the aim which the universe has imposed

upon man springs from unfounded presuppositions, and has therefore no place in science ; but the question may well be asked : how does the universe stand related to morality ? The consideration of this question we shall now take up.

(6.) *Nature and Morality.*

At this very moment nameless suffering fills the earth, and the most ruthless crimes are practised ; and all this happens in accordance with the action of natural laws. But the enormous amount of pain in the world cannot be explained as serving the moral improvement of man, because, as Darwin has said, the number of men in the world is as nothing in comparison with that of all other sentient beings, and those often suffer severely without any moral improvement.

"We behold," says Darwin, "the face of nature bright with gladness, we often see superabundance of food : we do not see or we forget that the birds which are idly singing round us mostly live on insects or seeds, and are thus constantly destroying life ; or we forget how largely these songsters, or their eggs, or their nestlings, are destroyed by birds or beasts of prey ; we do not always bear in mind that though food may now be superabundant, it is not so in all seasons of each year. . . . I estimated, chiefly from the greatly reduced numbers of nests in the spring, that the winter of 1854-55 destroyed four-fifths of the birds in my own grounds."

"Next to the greatness of these cosmic forces," says John Stuart Mill, "the quality which most forcibly strikes every one who does not avert his eyes from it, is their perfect and absolute ruthlessness. . . . In sober truth nearly all the things which men are hanged or imprisoned for doing to another are nature's every-day performances. Nature impales men, breaks them as if upon a wheel, casts them to be devoured by wild beasts, burns them to death, crushes them with stones like the first Christian martyr, starves them with hunger, freezes them with cold ; poisons them by the quick or slow venom of her exhalations, and has

hundreds of other hideous deaths in reserve, such as the ingenious cruelty of a Nabis or Domitian never surpassed. All this nature does with the most supercilious disregard both of mercy and of justice, emptying her shafts upon the best and noblest, indifferently with the meanest and worst ! upon those who are engaged in the highest and worthiest enterprises, and often as the direct consequences of the noblest acts, and it might almost be imagined, as a punishment for them !”

These words, the truth of which no one can deny, are a sufficient proof that the universe has not the character of a moral being.

But the universe has also not the character of an immoral being. For all this cruelty, this ruthlessness, is not anything vicious, it is not an injustice, for it is not voluntary ; our moral judgments apply only to dispositions of a will, while the universe has no will.

To the universe the good man is no more precious than the bad man ; for the universe has no affection, it does not love and hate.

But in the universe only what is moral lasts, and the immoral is doomed to go under. For the moral is nothing else than that which preserves life ; the immoral, nothing else than that which is destructive of life.

Let us bring vividly before our minds the significance of natural selection for the life of humanity. The principle that the beings best fitted to their surroundings survive is the expression of what happens, not of what ought to happen : it is a natural fact, not a moral law. We are subject to this fact of organic life in the same way that we are subject to the fact of gravitation ; entirely without respect to our wishes. Natural selection is the agent which, as the universal regulator of life, has worked upon and modelled the actual constitution of what is now to be found in the organic and animal world ; it is the universal power in nature which regulates human life. And what do we see in human life ? An enormous sum of physical and moral misery, which, instead of being hindered, is in part produced by that regulator. We must struggle unceasingly against that physical and moral evil, in-



asmuch as we do not regard the world as it exists, without our interference, as the best possible, but as one for the amelioration and rationalization of which we must toil. What happens as the consequence of the activity of the general forces of nature can never be a moral standard for us, since those forces produce also whatever is bad.

The principle of natural selection declares that the being which possesses the most fortunate characteristics, in other words, which is best adapted to its environment, has the best chance to preserve itself and propagate its like ; and this principle holds good for human beings as well as for all others. The fittest survive. Among the conditions of man's life we have to distinguish between the physical and the social factors.

What now is the moral constitution which makes the one endowed with it survive? The principle of natural selection is a fact of nature, not a moral law ; nothing therefore in the history of mankind conflicts with it. The crucifixion of Christ does not conflict with it, nor the poisoning of Socrates, nor the burning of Bruno. Christ, Socrates, and Bruno were in their social environment not the fittest ; their death was a direct consequence of their character. It depends entirely upon the special constitution of a society who will be the survivor in it. There are, of course, as Everett says, "certain kinds and degrees of immorality that are everywhere fatal to success. A certain kind of honour, the proverb tells us, is necessary if one would preserve his standing in a company of thieves. But beyond the avoidance of the most gross and open violations of the social compact, there is little that is everywhere and always excluded by the demands of the social environment. The man who was fittest to succeed in the early days of the Roman republic would have failed in the latter days of the empire ; and one whom the social elements of the empire pushed into prominence would have fared hardly in the Republic." "Indeed, the societies in which the highest and finest moral attributes are a passport to success are very rare."

But this is not the final word which may be said concerning the relation of Darwinism to morals. The principle of natural

selection regulates not only the life of the individual, it rules also over that of races and nations. It is very possible in certain societies for selfishness, cunning, underhandedness and oppressive domineering, or cringing sycophancy and meanness of spirit, or love of pomp, to get the upper hand ; it is quite possible for men of such characteristics in certain states to have the best worldly outlook, to preserve themselves and their families, while the man who hates injustice, lying, hypocrisy, and all meanness would go under. Still that which is bad can have no enduring existence. It is true that characteristics are inherited, but not in the same combination as they were in the father or mother ; moral characteristics like those named above, are not always in that fitting connection which guarantees their success in any given constitution of society. If we permit some other quality to enter into the character in consequence of inheritance or education, or if we let any given quality drop out, that happy balance which secured success can be entirely disturbed. The chances that the posterity of men who possess such characteristics as those named above should remain long on earth—that they should not sooner or later destroy themselves in consequence of collisions with the laws of health or the statutes of the state, or the demands of society, are not very great. The principle of natural selection applies also to the life of races. And in this life of the community it manifests itself in a much clearer way than in the individual life, that the wages of sin is death. Should the idea prevail in any society that the struggle for existence justifies and demands a ruthless carrying out of one's own individual interests, a suppression and fleecing of the weak by the strong, the destruction of suffering by destroying the sufferers, the rooting out of conscience and natural sympathy, which might protest against such conduct, should selfishness be thus let loose in any community and physical strength and fox-like shrewdness become the highest ideal : the days of that community would be numbered ; it would have worked out its own destruction by setting up the struggle of all against all. Should times of hunger and danger, times of national war set in, we should see what the fate of that community would be in which

patriotism, self-sacrifice, idealism, respect for faithfulness and justice, were only an object of scorn. "History is the world's court of justice."

All positive human authorities come under the authority of the conditions of life. If the former do not take the nature of things into consideration, when they touch the foundations of social life, their efforts must be ultimately shattered against the mighty force of this "impersonal authority." "Righteousness exalteth a nation, but sin is a reproach to my people."

Natural selection is then a power that judges, inasmuch as it lets only the good endure while it permits the evil to be destroyed. The recognition of this fact will encourage us in our efforts to do good, and in our struggles against the bad; but let us guard against misinterpreting the meaning of this principle, and mistaking it for simply a power of justice. The law of natural selection is simply a natural fact and states what inevitably happens. And what will inevitably happen? The evil will disappear and the good will continue to exist—*provided the good already exists!* If that principle is to "select" the good, the good must already be there. It would not contradict the principle if the whole human race should die out: just as in fact countless species have become extinct; but rather it inevitably follows that the human race must die out, if it becomes bad. Not independently of us, but through us, through our volitions, consciously directed toward that end will progressive evolution be brought about.

The likeness to justice which is to be found in the domination of that cosmical power does not satisfy our need of justice. It does not appear as a sufficient compensation for an evil life that the sins will be visited upon the children unto the third and fourth generation; but we demand that it be rendered to every man according to his deeds. If a man, regardless of the fate of his children, exposes them, treats them cruelly, and teaches them to become criminals, will he be punished by the fact that his children will come to woe? will the statesman who brings ruin, intellectual and moral, upon his own nation through his pursuit of personal advantage, but who remains in power and honour until his death,

be punished in that his nation at the next crisis falls to pieces? In fact all our efforts to establish justice would be entirely unnecessary if the course of nature, when not guided by man, were already bringing it about.

After all we can only in a very limited sense say that an eternal power, not ourselves, makes for righteousness. It is a part of the definition of just and unjust actions, that they look to the furtherance or hinderance of mankind's interests; therefore we cannot call it an especial principle of justice in nature that the just really furthers the life of mankind, and the unjust tends to destroy it. The likeness to benevolence, which we can ascribe to nature, whereby the fundamental constitution of man as well as of all living beings makes for the welfare of the species, and whereby all primitive instincts are accordingly good, and do not need to be trampled out but only need to be controlled—this apparent "benevolence" in nature is the inevitable condition for the existence of living beings: they would have died out long ago, or rather never could have been developed at all if the fundamental characteristics did not lead to the preservation of life.

Everything that exists belongs to the universe. Men are a part of it; the good as well as the bad are rooted in its inmost being. The proper answer to the question, How is the universe related to the ideals of justice and goodness? would be a statement of how the beings in the universe which are self-conscious, how those parts of the universe which are capable of justice and goodness, are related to those ideals. And in answering this question it would be necessary to determine, not only the present and the past, but the future of mankind, and the character of moral beings on other inhabited planets. Therefore we cannot answer this question.

Inferences as to the future of mankind are extremely uncertain. We hope that the races which come after us will be better and happier than we; this hope has also a scientific probability on its side, for human intelligence has made progress in the course of human history up to the present time, and yet grows still higher. Experience, the knowledge of nature and of man, has been con-

tinually enriched and will be still further augmented. Sympathy with the mental states of others has always developed higher and higher, and will win new strength and compass. There was a time when the moral precepts of races had regard only to the welfare each of their own tribe ; not even the abstract conception of universal justice and benevolence—a justice and benevolence even toward strangers—was to be found, and as until now the moral ideals have become higher and nobler, they will also in the future become more and more perfect. But at the same time there have sprung up new and more refined kinds of vices, and only too often the punishment for these has been very slight. Will not the web of human life always be a mixture of the threads of good and evil crossing each other? Will not the struggle of good against evil continue for ever, and a perfect right never reign? And what will be the relation of the forces for good to those which make for evil? We do not know.

But we do know that man possesses a capacity for all that is highest and best as well as for what is bad, that he hides in himself a whole world of possible perfections. And we know that every noble personality possesses a power to bless, and by its mere example makes many others better.

#### (7.) *Man and the Universe.*

What then is the worthy bearing of a human being toward the universe? "The Christian," said Luther, "is a free lord, and an underling to no one." In modern times man feels himself, when standing over against the universe, not an underling, but a free lord. He does not prostrate himself in the presence of nature, but stands erect. He is himself a part of the world, a "free fact," as the world in general is; and so far as the world is known to us, he is the supreme fact. In himself, however, he finds conscience supreme. A man guided by conscience need bow before nothing. Rather is he to bring all things under his rule. The force of conscience is the highest power in nature. It alone is authority and is inviolable, "the starry heavens above us" is for us no object of worship: "the moral

law within us" forbids us to bow down before anything whatsoever. He who worships, renounces his free will, his right to examine all things and his personal independence; he renounces the guidance of his conscience. The forces of nature which are beneath man, may yet awaken in him, by their effects, the feeling of sublimity; but it is only that sublimity which is peculiar to physical magnitude, power and might. And this æsthetic feeling of wonder which is akin to fear and dread has nothing in common with moral sentiment. The æsthetic and the moral sublime are as different as might and right. The lightning which strikes down a man of noblest merit at the moment of his noblest deed, is not for us an object of reverence.

Likewise the feeling of mystery which men often entertain in the presence of nature is not a moral emotion. To the savage almost the whole of nature may appear mysterious; over against it he is acquainted with insecurity and fear, he does not know the forces and sequences of nature, he scarcely knows what to expect the next minute, he does not know but that hidden hostile powers lurk in ambush about him, to whom he must be offered up as a sacrifice. The expression which one sometimes hears: everything in nature is mysterious, has no meaning; for the word mysterious has no significance except in contrast to its opposite, clear, evident, known, comprehensible, and if there is nothing clear there can be nothing mysterious, just as when there is nothing small, there is nothing great.

In the mind of a modern man of science arises another feeling toward the natural universe—a feeling related to that of friendly confidence. Scientific investigation has shown him that nature is always uniform in her operations, and that under the same circumstances she will always produce the same results. He begins to put his trust in nature, and to believe that in the future she will cause under like circumstances like occurrences to take place. And he seeks to make himself continually better acquainted with nature's modes of procedure, in order to regulate his conduct accordingly. Often men have meant by an act in accordance with nature, nothing more in reality than an intelligent, rational,

wise act—that is, one which, being founded on a knowledge of the general facts of nature, chooses the right means to the end in view. The right means to carry out our designs are given us in nature. We do not make them ; we find, we discover them—in carrying out our purposes we are entirely dependent upon nature. Whoever disregards the causal connections of things, the inevitable chain of consequences, whoever forgets that it does not depend upon our will and wish, what effects certain events have, will not reach his goal ; he will perhaps reap death where he thought to sow life. We do not create the qualities things possess, but find them at hand. We do not cause the effects which this or that material produces upon the human organism ; they happen without us, and in spite of us. Perhaps it depended upon us to bring the material into touch with the human organism ; but when that has once happened, we cannot regulate the effects of this occurrence according to our wishes. The conditions of human health and happiness are given in the very constitution of the world, and if we wish to make a man well and happy, we must proceed according to the eternal and unchangeable course of nature, upon which health and happiness depend. And likewise, if we wish to help on the welfare of a nation, or of all mankind, we must pay heed to the natural laws which regulate these things. It not unfrequently happens that statesmen do not always consult the course of nature, that they disregard the most certain results of human experience as to what really serves the welfare of society, and fancy that they can direct the consequences of their own political methods as they please by means of their diplomatic arts. It sometimes happens that by destroying independence and personal energy, by suppressing true patriotism, by favouring a selfish disposition and a cowardly hypocrisy, by corruption of the press, they attain their own ends most easily, and at the same time think they can ward off the evil effects which according to the experience of the past their policy must produce. But it never happens that nature even once makes an exception in favour of such men ; she always lets the regular consequences follow ; she never permits it to be a wholesome policy to check or to poison the life-energies of a people.

The ideal laws of conduct are, like general facts of nature, "absolute," "universally applicable," "unchangeable." For they are nothing less than the laws upon which the attainment of the end which conscience prescribes, the universal welfare of mankind, depends. Morals bring us most surely into the closest connection with the constitution of the universe; but this connection does not consist in our discovering, by observation of nature, our highest aim, or in permitting the universe to confer this aim upon us, as our own, but only in our finding in the universe the means to that supreme end which our conscience dictates.

The modern enlightened man does not worship or revere the powers of nature, but studies, utilises, and controls them for his own purposes. The universe may contain conscious beings that excel us mortals in mental capacity; but we are not acquainted with them; besides ourselves we know only beings subordinate to us; and everywhere and always, on any planet of any other sun as upon our earth, the higher powers will look upon the lower as subjects to be tamed and ruled. Whoever has found out laws of nature, and acts in accordance with his knowledge, shall find the forces of nature willing servants to the realization of his noblest aims; but they will none the less obey him when he pursues the most degraded aims. The task of man is not to allow nature outside of him free sweep—it would be irrational and impossible: irrational because then all conduct would be superfluous, impossible because man cannot continue in utter inactivity; every step he takes brings forth changes in nature. His task is not to follow the course of nature—that would be immoral: as nature continually does things which, if a man did them consciously, would constitute the most degraded transgressions. But his task is to lead nature on toward moral ends, and prevent her serving wicked ends.

From the notion that nature must be an object of reverence it would follow that the course of nature ought not to be changed. And indeed from the earliest times to the present attempts to interfere with nature have been condemned as irreligious. In the



sentiment of the ancient Greeks it appeared an effrontery to the gods that Xerxes should pierce the promontory between Mount Athos and the main land, and join the coasts of the Hellespont with bridges of boats. In the same way it was on many sides counted as an insult to God that Franklin should undertake to make the lightning harmless. And even now many regard certain undertakings of natural scientists as an impertinent prying into divine mysteries.

If anyone dares to oppose theism or pantheism, he will be charged with taking all the sense and meaning out of human life. But, in truth, human life has more sense, more significance when the task of doing our work is not assigned to the deity or to the universe, and we recognise that it depends entirely upon us whether righteousness and love are to rule in the world. Pantheism and theism may weaken our sense of responsibility. Let us be satisfied in knowing that nature is not an enemy to morality, but may be led to serve the cause of the good.

We do not live in a moral cosmos, and therefore we cannot have reverence for the world as it is ; but on the other hand neither do we live in a moral chaos, our life receives its moral worth through our being able to lead up the world to the ideal of a moral cosmos. And we feel toward nature something like gratitude because she makes this possible, and in general we feel something like gratitude for all the good things she gives us. But when we ourselves happen to be in a happy situation, and although we have good cause to be satisfied with our lot, still we do not forget those who are not fortunate—those whom the wheels of nature crush. And when our own life happens to be worth living, we still cannot help remembering to whom we in first place owe this : we are conscious that it is through our fellow-men, whose unceasing toil has produced our highest good : and so we do not waste the energy of our gratitude upon that which is without feelings, but we turn it toward our fellow-men. We feel ourselves most intimately related to the whole of things, for we are in very fact a piece of the whole, we are in actual touch with the remotest stars, we are rooted in universal nature. Much

in the universe is beneath us, but the sum total is not beneath us, for we and the highest minds are verily parts of the universe. The cosmic forces outside of us do not bring forth of themselves a just order of things; but neither do they prevent us from creating that order.

We cannot but regard the existence of the world as something desirable; our attitude of mind toward the World-all is not unlike Spinoza's "Intellectual Love;" we have closed a treaty of peace in our heart with that which cannot by human power be overcome. This affection toward the universe is quiet and unvarying, it rounds and finishes our emotional life, but is not its centre. Our deepest interest is in mankind, and in the thought of faithful human service.

#### (8.) *Man's Moral Independence.*

The outcome of all our considerations is the recognition of man's moral independence.

"All laws," it has been said, "presuppose a law-giver." But the moral law-giver is not outside of us, but in us. "The essence of morality is obedience to a superior." But this "superior," this highest, this which alone is holy and has authority, is our conscience. "That power which our desires did not bring forth, but which constrains and binds us, under certain circumstances breaking our will, at any rate dictating to it its direction," is our conscience. "It is the very meaning of morality that it is not an aim which we arbitrarily set up for ourselves." Without doubt! We do not arbitrarily give ourselves our consciences, so we do not make duty. "I ought to pursue the good whether I do it or not." Most surely! The moral feeling in me does not vanish simply because in the conflict of motives it is overborne, and the final act of the will turns out to be in opposition to it, and I am not the only one that passes judgment upon my conduct. "You ought," if it comes from without only, is not a moral imperative, but simply a positive dictation. In the moral sense each one's conscience alone can say to the man himself, "You ought." When another says it to me he in reality appeals to my own conscience, and seeks to call forth its voice, and he does not impose his will upon

me. It was very natural in ages of supernatural belief that the domain of morals, which touches men so closely, should be filled with supersensible creations of fancy ; but ghosts and more refined metaphysical beings are disappearing before the weapons of light which scientific knowledge carries about. Mankind has attained the age of self-consciousness ; it scorns to be led any longer by the apron-string of tradition, and will look after itself. It has brought back morals from heaven to earth. It finds in duty no longer a sacrifice to be offered to unknown powers, but an opportunity for humanly serving humanity. Christ's words : "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath," are capable of the widest interpretation.

"Is not that which ought to take place as much a real part of the necessary order of things as that which does happen ?" Most surely, what ought to happen is a part of the order of things, that is, a part of man, the voice, the will of his conscience. When we discriminate between what happens and what ought to happen, we do not mean that the thing which ought to happen has no empirical fact lying at its base ; if this were the case, if it simply floated about detached in the air, it would be a fiction. The fact to which the "you ought" gives expression is the moral emotion, the conscience, the impulse to do right, which to a certain degree is present in every grown-up man in a civilized community.

"It is remarkable that something which is not, nevertheless dictates the law to that which is." That were not only remarkable, but an absolute contradiction. But our moral feeling is a real power, and even a cosmic force, and not "something which is not." "The ideal forms struggle everywhere to actualise themselves." The fact which corresponds to this Platonic and poetic expression is that moral impulses exist which wish to actualise themselves. "We feel in ourselves the pressure of the ideal world upon the real." This is a fantastic dressing-up of the truth that our moral feelings constrain and force us. The ideal world, the world as it ought to be, is the world as our moral feeling wishes it. "There are moral aims of our being whether we are aware of it or not." We may readily assent to this also ; for a man can have moral impulses without his attention being directed toward

them. "But has not our whole life one supreme purpose?" To this question we have simply to answer: *Give* your whole life a supreme moral purpose.

The world is not governed by gods or devils, or by a fate; man is not possessed by any such beings, but is a free, self-contained, part of nature, in which, as in everything that is actual, "the sovereignty of existence presents itself." We are not possessed, and have not been made by a personal voluntary being; we alone, therefore, are responsible for our conduct, and we cannot put the guilt off on to any other being. There is much moral evil in the world; but nature outside of man is not bad, it is not responsible for the evil, for it did not will it. Moral judgment restricts itself to a part of nature only, to self-conscious beings, to human deeds; it is inapplicable to unconscious things or to the processes of animal and inanimate nature. There is thus evil in man but not in nature universally; Rousseau was right in exhorting: "Man, seek no longer the origin of evil; you yourself are its origin." Evil is not an insoluble mystery any more than good is. It only becomes a mystery when the attempt is made to reconcile it with the all-good and all-powerful creator of the world; contradictions will not be reconciled; but at bottom they are not mysteries or riddles but only—contradictions. Evil and pain in the world have no end or purpose, for they have not been willed. There is nothing mysterious about them, or, at least, nothing more than in any other actuality. Evil, that is, a bad disposition of will directed toward the injury of one's fellow-men, has its root in the general constitution of the universe; but this is so arranged that evil has no enduring hold in the universe; the good is also rooted, and it drives out and overcomes the evil.

It is foolish for men to ask, as they sometimes do, complainingly, and as if bringing a charge against someone: Why have I received this or that peculiarity? why been given this or that education? why have I been placed in this or that environment? Such questions have as much worth as these: Why was I born a boy and not a girl? why a German and not a Laplander? why in the nineteenth century after Christ instead of before? All these

questions are foolish, for they presuppose that the person has an independent and abstract existence before he takes on his individual and special character. When we abstract from a special person all his peculiarities, there remain only the general conception of a person and the word *person*, but no definite being. A man cannot ask why he is born with this or that special equipment, but only why he exists. And here he must consider what he means in asking "why," whether it is a question as to the cause or as to the purpose, or what else.

Foolish also is the excuse which one sometimes hears when a man is to be punished. "I did not make myself, I did not choose my characteristics, therefore I cannot be made answerable for them." Must a man exist before he exists, if he is to be made answerable? The excuse presupposes that the man could in fact be made responsible if he had chosen his own characteristics. But, shall this choice have been the work of chance? Then the responsibilities would fall away. But if it was not accidental it must have had a reason. Shall we say that this lay outside the chooser himself? Then clearly the responsibility would again be removed. The ground, therefore, must have lain in the chooser himself, in his mental constitution. But is he responsible for his constitution, which determined his choice? According to the opinion of our opponents he can be so only on condition that he has chosen them. We must, therefore, place back of every choice another choice, and so on endlessly. But no, the responsibility has nothing to do with such a choice.

#### (9.) *Conclusion.*

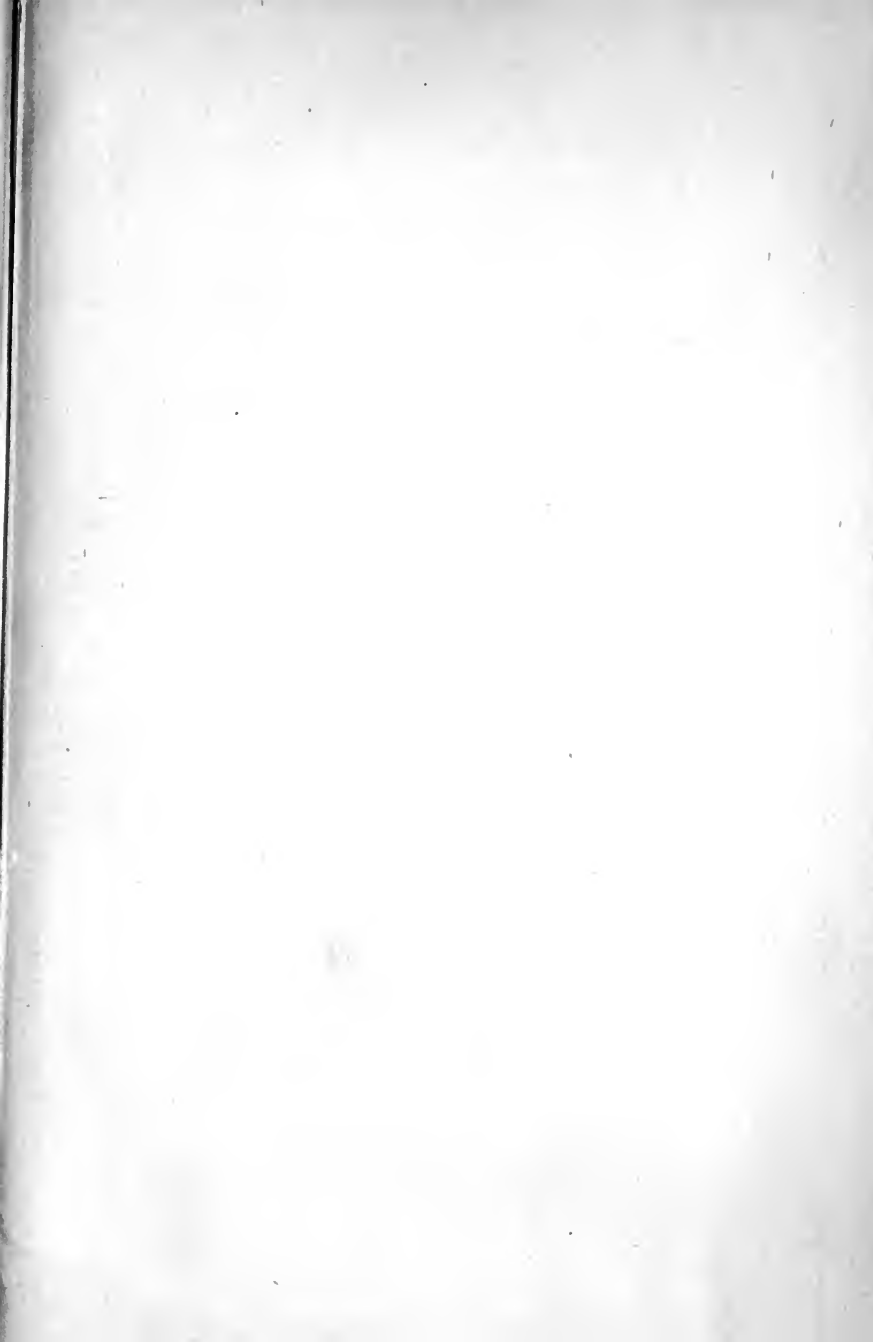
We have seen that morality is as independent of metaphysics as it is of theology, that nothing more would be added to moral duty even if we assumed that it was a divine law, or a law of nature. The notion that a man has received from nature his purpose in life, presupposes that nature is a volitional being, or a creation of such a being; and this presupposition cannot be justified. But even if it could be substantiated it would be ethically indifferent; since as moral beings we should still have to ask whether that which had been purposed by nature, or

by its creator, was good ; if we should follow the will of nature without settling this question, we should not be acting morally ; and equally immoral would it be if, after settling the question, we should wish to follow nature's will, because it was nature's will, instead of following it because the thing willed was good. Nature, like the gods and like men, might inflict evil upon us, but only our own conscience can punish us morally. Each man is responsible morally only for himself.

Nature outside of man does not display the character of a moral being ; still only the good has a lasting place in nature, and the evil must perish. Death is the wages of sin, but the gift of the good is lasting life. There is no ideal moral law except that which is sanctioned by the enduring facts of nature ; and because the order of nature endures, because the principle of cause and effect is without exception, therefore the moral law has an abiding cosmic significance. It is valid for the inhabitants of all worlds for all times: as truly as there is a physics of the stars, so also is there an ethics for the stars. To bring good into the world and make her prevail is our work, which nature in general does not do for us. But neither does nature work against our good purposes, she rather permits herself to be forced into their service. That gives us encouragement, while the power of man's moral energies is the basis of our hope.

The morally developed man preserves a free self-conscious attitude over against mankind, and over against the universe ; for the highest in nature dwells in him. The world is not for him an object of adoration ; but it is an object of delight, for it is beautiful and sublime, and the good in it predominates. Neither for the good nor for the evil, however, is nature responsible, for it has not purposed anything ; and man, because he is not the work of a personal volitional being, cannot shirk his responsibilities, he alone remains the object of moral judgment. He is independent, and although neither God nor nature has commanded him, or set him a goal, nevertheless from his conscience issues the commandment: Give thy life a moral purpose.

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